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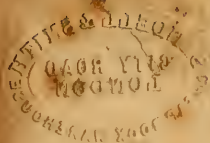
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EMENDA-

EMENDATIONS in the FIRST VOLUME.

Page 36. *line ult. read from.* p. 72. l. 14. r. in the Remainder. p. 73. in Not. r. Μαρασσῶν. p. 77. in Not. r. Part of Scripture. p. 83. l. 22. r. seems. p. 171. l. 1. r. People. p. 189. l. 23. r. unknown. p. 228. l. 6. r. them. l. 7. r. him. p. 235. l. 5. r. Impertinence. p. 242. l. 2. r. the End. p. 260. l. 1. r. by Christ. p. 305. l. 21. r. of Christ. p. 312. l. 19. *dele* Comma after read. p. 335. l. 22. r. his Dominion.

S E R M O N I.

JOHN XX. 31.

But these Signs are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life through his Name.

THAT Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is the great and fundamental Distinction of the Gospel Religion from all others.

The *Jews* expect a Christ or Messiah : But will not allow that Jesus was the Person promised, under that Character, in their Scriptures. The *Gentiles* of old Times and the modern Unbelievers having no solid Objection to the general Notion, that God may, on some Occasions, communicate his Will to Mankind about religious Matters by a Messenger chosen out from amongst themselves, and yet refusing to own that Jesus was thus commissioned, have founded their Unbe-

lief on this Pretence, that he did not (or at least that it does not appear to them he did) produce sufficient Credentials of a Mission from God.

Now the great Evidences to the Truth and Genuineness of Jesus's Character, as the Christ and the Son and Messenger of God to Mankind, were, first, Miracles wrought by him, and 2dly, Prophecies that went before of Christ, and were fulfilled in the Person of Jesus. From these, in both of which God must necessarily have been either actively or passively concerned, we do conclude, that God did thereby plainly signify to Mankind, that he had appointed him to declare his Will to them, and that whatsoever he delivered to them as such, was to be received and obeyed without reserve.

Evidences so strong in themselves, and so well attested as to the Truth of them, one would reasonably imagine, were at least entitled to a fair and candid Examination, and that where nothing solid or material was to be objected, they should not be exposed to cavil or ridicule.

But since the Enemies to Religion are otherwise minded, it behoves its Friends and Advocates to use the utmost Caution in
I
stating

stating the great Proofs aforesaid, so as, if it be possible, to leave no Room for the Exercise either of Sophistry or Banter, from the opposite Quarter.

In Pursuance of which Design, and at the same Time to answer the pious Ends of our honourable Founder, I intend, through God's Assistance, in this and the ensuing Lectures, first to state the Evidence given to the Christian Religion from Miracles and Prophecy, and afterwards to defend each of them against such Objections as have at any Time appeared against either of them.

I am to begin with that of Miracles, and first am to give what I apprehend to be the true State of the Argument from thence in favour of divine Revelation.

It has been long since observed, that Miracles, *i. e.* Performances above the Power or Sleight of Men to effect, will not prove the Authors of them divinely commissioned, because such Performances, for ought that we can certainly know and demonstrate, may be effected by Devils or wicked Angels. And as, on that Supposition, God is not certainly the Agent in any Miracle, so no Miracle, in itself, will evince that God authorized or commissioned the Doer of it to publish a Religion

ligion or Message from him to Mankind. In Aid therefore of the Argument, it has been suggested, that the Internals of every Religion to be proved by Miracles, must first appear good and worthy of God, and that then Miracles will certainly prove that such a Religion came from God ; because it is utterly incongruous and absurd to suppose, that any wicked Being would work Miracles to recommend a Religion that was intrinsically good and conducive to promote Virtue and Piety in the World. None but a good as well as powerful Principle could find his Account in the Propagation of Doctrines and Opinions of this Tendency : And therefore none but God would lend his Power and Authority to such an Use.

Now, though all this be extremely rational and true, and though all the Internals of the Bible are qualified for Proof from Miracles, on account of their Excellency and Usefulness ; yet sure it would be very desirable, that Miracles could alone prove and vouch for the divine Authority of Scripture, without any previous Appeal to the Internals of it. For such an Appeal necessarily draws out the Argument into a great Length, and requires such Attention, as few are willing or able to give.

give. Besides, the Enemies of Religion have so many Difficulties and Objections against the Internals of revealed Religion, that if we are never to apply the Proof from Miracles, till all these are settled and adjusted, we shall scarce have an Opportunity to do it at all. Supposing us and our unbelieving Adversaries agreed as to the Purity of the Morals contained in the Bible, of which notwithstanding I see but little likelihood; yet positive Duties, Articles of Belief, and Historical Facts are Topicks, on which the Disputers of this World may maintain everlasting Controversy. And if plain Men are not to attend to the Evidence for the Divine Authority of their Bible from Miracles, till they are convinced that there are no more Doubts to be raised about the Congruity and Truth of what is related therein, we must despair of ever seeing the Time, when the Use of this grand Argument will be proper or seasonable. In thus supposing the Possibility of endless Cavil against the Internals of the Christian Religion, and the Rule of it, the Holy Bible, I neither do honour to the Parts and Learning of unbelieving Writers, nor derogate any thing from the Dignity and Perfection of the Scriptures: For very moderate Parts, whether

natural or acquired, will set a Man up in the Trade of Sophistry and cavilling. And since Writings in our own Language and Times, and on single Points, have yet afforded Subjects of Doubt and Dispute ; none can justly wonder, that holy Writ, part of which is the oldest Record in the World, and all of it ancient, written in Languages long since out of common Use, and on a vast Variety of Subjects, I say it is no wonder, that Writings, under all these Circumstances, should yield Men of perverse Hearts and wrangling Dispositions room for much Cavil and Contradiction.

All these Things then being considered, it must appear greatly for the Interest of Religion, and highly serviceable to all honest Enquirers into the Merits of it, that the Argument from Miracles should be discharged from the Incumbrance that lies upon it from the supposed Necessity of a previous Satisfaction, that the Internals of every Religion, to which they are made Vouchers, be clear of Immorality, Absurdity and Falshood. And, if I am not greatly mistaken, Miracles need not the Aid, that is so great a Clog to the Use and to the Application of them : They singly furnish us with a Proof for the Truth of divine Revelation, fitted to the Leisure and
Capacity

Capacity of the Bulk of Mankind; a Proof that proceeds upon few and clear Principles, that is short in the Course of it, and evident in the Conclusion.

Before I lay down the Rule for distinguishing, when it is that Miracles prove a Revelation to be truly divine, it will be necessary to premise, that the Argument does not immediately affect Atheists, but sober Deists only, that is such Persons, as admit the Existence of a God, and allow him to have every Perfection both natural and moral, which Reason or natural Religion discovers necessarily to belong to the supreme Being.

To Persons then in these Circumstances I affirm, that Miracles wrought in Favour of any Religion prove it to come from God, when they are many in Number, wonderful in Kind, and, above all, when they are either uncontrolled by opposite and rival Miracles, or, if controlled, prove manifestly superior for Number and Strangeness to those of the opposite Religion. If these Properties shall be found in the Miracles, that were wrought in Confirmation of Christianity and of every other Revelation owned thereby, Deists cannot, without denying or contradict-

ing their own Principles, dispute its divine Authority. For if a Religion delivered by Persons who shew these Credentials of a Commission from above, may notwithstanding possibly be false ; God himself must in every such Case be the Abettor, if not the Author of the Fraud : Both which are absurd upon those Principles of natural Religion, which are received by all sober and intelligent Deists. For the Light of Reason concerning the moral Perfections of God, is in nothing more clear, than in this, that he is essentially true in himself, and an Enemy to Fiction and Falshood in others ; that he is too wise to be deceived by any of his Creatures, and too good to impose upon them ; that he is too firm to be persuaded, and too powerful to be awed into so much as a Connivance at the Frauds of others, how subtle or mighty soever they may be. Understand me to mean here religious Frauds and Forgeries, carried on in the Name of God, and recommended by such Miracles, as usually pass upon Mankind, for probable, if not for certain Testimonies of the divine Approbation. For no one pretends that God is obliged always to lay open the Villainies, which Men carry on in the Name of themselves or their
Fellow-

Fellow-creatures, and which they conduct by human Power and Policy only. But should He, at any time, lend a miraculous Attestation himself, or suffer others to do it, to a Religion as coming from him, of which he is not the Author, we should have Reason to conclude him destitute of the lowest Pretensions to Honour, Probity, and Truth. No Man was ever esteemed in any Degree wise or good, who would knowingly and tamely suffer a Neighbour or Fellow-creature to be injured by a Forgery of his own Hand and Seal. Much less then can it be imagined, that the Supreme Being, who is Wisdom, Goodness, and Beneficence itself, would deal so by his Creatures and Servants.

Hence therefore it should seem no difficult Matter to fix a general Rule, whereby Men may safely judge, when it is that Miracles prove a Religion to be from God, without attending to any intrinsic Characters of Truth and Falshood in the Religion itself. Whatever Revelation has the Evidence of many, wonderful and unopposed, or unrival'd Miracles, it must, for the Reasons already given, be received as divine. And when a Revelation, attested to by Miracles, is opposed

posed upon the Strength of rival Miracles, we must determine for that Side, on which a Superiority of those wonderful Vouchers for Number and Greatness appears.

As the Reason of the Thing, *i. e.* the allowed Principles of natural Religion, is the Foundation of this Rule for distinguishing true from pretended Revelations, so is it confirmed by Fact. The Advocates for Christianity willingly submit the Truth of every Revelation they are concerned for to this Test, and admit every Religion that is vouched for by Miracles thus circumstanced.

In this Manner the Mission of *Moses* to the Children of *Israel* is proved to be divine. For he wrought certain Wonders before their Eyes, vastly exceeding all human Art or Abilities, to which no Opposition was made, as the Credentials of his Character and heavenly Commission. The People, therefore, to whom he was sent, did rationally in receiving him as the Messenger of God. For tho' evil Spirits might be capable of doing what *Moses* then did ; yet the *Israelites* knew that God was too good to leave them wholly to the Mercy of Apostate Angels, and that if the Message, brought to them in God's Name, and confirmed by an Appearance of his
Power,

Power, had been a Forgery, the essential Honour and Justice of his Nature would have induced him to disown it by some publick Manifestation of his Power and Presence. And since nothing like this offered itself, they rested assured that *Moses* must have been divinely sent, and that he had faithfully delivered his Message. Again, at the Execution of his other Commission, that to *Pharaoh*, Miracles were *Moses's* only Credentials. And these, for some time, were opposed by others of the self same Kind, to all outward Appearance, by *Pharaoh's* Magicians: But in the end, these Rivals to *Moses* were forced by a superior Power to drop the Competition, and the Servant of God was distinguished by working *Miracles thenceforward* without Controll. *Pharaoh* therefore, for hardening his Heart against such evident and repeated Conviction, deserved the Vengeance that afterwards overtook him.

After God had brought the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, he further revealed himself to them by the Ministry of *Moses* and *Aaron*, in Points of a civil, as well as of a religious Nature. And that *Moses* did not impose his own Contrivances on that People, for the Commands of God, is evident from the
Rule

Rule so oft mentioned. For the Delivery of some of these Laws was attended with awful and preternatural Appearances, and *Moses* wrought unopposed Miracles in the Execution of the rest. Particularly the sudden and dreadful Vengeance from Heaven, which overtook such as were concern'd in mutinous Oppositions to those Appointments, argues, that they were unquestionably of divine Institution. For it is morally impossible, that a just and good God should permit any evil Power or Principle to have destroyed *Nadab* and *Abihu* or *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram* by preternatural Inflictions, only for opposing an Impostor, and not submitting to one that had really taken too much upon him. Since therefore both the Mission and Religion of *Moses* were confirmed by Miracles many in Number, wonderful in Kind, and superior to all Opposition, they are alike evinced to be from God.

After the *Jewish* Religion had continued for many Ages to be the only written Revelation that was built on the sure Foundation of Miracles uncontroll'd, or however in the End superior, the Religion of *Jesus* was offered to the World on the same general Motives of Credibility: Tho' the Miracles

racles of the Gospel were more numerous,
 and in some Particulars more wonderful,
 than those of the Law. For we read of
 none in that whole Period who raised him-
 self from the Dead, or by a Power of his
 own ascended into Heaven, as the Author
 of the Christian Religion did. Further, the
 Gospel Miracles, at the Time of their Ope-
 ration, seem to have been uncontroll'd: Nor
 indeed have we any certain Accounts from
 Scripture of Anti-Miracles in the Days of
 the Apostles. It is true our Lord foretold
 that an Opposition to his Gospel should arise
 from false Christs and false Prophets, who
 should shew great Signs and Wonders. But
 from the Caution which immediately fol-
 lows, and is directed to the By-standers, it
 should seem that those Events were to hap-
 pen before the End of that very Generation:
 And to this agrees the Time in which false
 Christs made their Appearance, which was
 chiefly in the first Century. However, we
 have great Reason to believe that the Disci-
 ples of *Jesus* got the better in every Com-
 petition of this Kind. For had the false
 Christs and false Prophets been able to do
 Miracles equal, for Number and Greatness,
 with those of the Gospel, it had been im-
 possible

possible for Christianity to have extended itself so speedily and largely, as it did, in that very Age of rival Miracles. Among the Oppositions made to the Truth of the Gospel in general, we may also reckon *Mahometism*. The Author of it pretended indeed to be a divine Teacher; but as he utterly disclaimed Miracles, the Merits of his Claim to the prophetick Character do not concern the Rule which has justified the Mission of *Moses* and of *Jesus*. Upon the whole therefore we find that as God cannot, with a Salvo to his Justice and Goodness, permit false Religions to have the Attestation of more and more wonderful Miracles, than are given to true Revelations: So nothing like such a Permission appears in the History of the Religions, that have successively obtained in the World.

The Sum then of the Argument, for the Revelations contained in the Bible, from Miracles, is this. Those wonderful Events must be imputed either to Art-Magick, the Power of evil Spirits, or the Agency of God. The first of these is given up by all intelligent Men, both by Believers and Infidels, as a Science falsely so called. The second Cause, *viz.* the Power of evil Spirits can have no Place

Place with Deists, among whom Apostate Angels pass for Chimæras and Absurdities. So that against our present Adversaries the Gospel Miracles, if they were real Facts, must have been wrought by the Hand of God. But in so secure a Cause as that of the Christian Religion is, we may venture to quit this Advantage. The Unbelievers shall be allowed to reason from such Principles as they themselves have exploded: They have Liberty for once to suppose not only that there are such Beings as evil Spirits, but also that they are naturally able to work every Miracle related in the New Testament. Only let it be confessed, which surely no sober Deist can question, that God has as much concern for Truth and fair Dealing, as every honest Man has; and that Devils are neither crafty nor powerful enough to over-rule the divine Regards to Sincerity and Justice, and we ask no more. For if God can restrain evil Spirits from giving miraculous Attestations to Religions forged in his Name, his essential Properties of Justice and Goodness leave us not the least Room for doubting but that he always has secured, and always will secure his Creatures from such fatal Deceptions. We are therefore as well assured that
evil

evil Spirits did not effect the Miracles recorded in the Bible, as that Men did not : Because as the latter is naturally impossible, the former is morally impossible. It remains therefore that God only must have wrought these great Marvels, and consequently that the Religion of the Bible, delivered by Persons whose Commission was accompanied by Attestations so unquestionably divine, is entirely and most certainly true.

S E R M O N II.

J O H N XX. 31.

But these Signs are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life thro' his Name.

THE Design of my last Lecture from these Words was, to state the Evidence for revealed Religion from Miracles, in such a Manner as that, without appealing to the Internals of the Religion revealed, they shall singly prove the Truth and Certainty of it. In order hereto I laid down a general Rule for judging, when it is that Miracles prove a Religion to be from God, without attending to any intrinsic Characters of Truth or Falshood, Utility or Disadvantage in the Religion itself. And the Rule was this—Whatever System of Faith and Practice is confirmed by many, wonderful, and unopposed or unrival'd Miracles, is

to be received as divine ; and when different and contradictory Systems of Religion are attested to by Miracles, we must determine our Assent to that Side, on which a manifest Superiority of those wonderful Vouchers appears.

After I had shewn that this Rule is built on the Reason of the Thing, *i. e.* on those Principles of natural Religion, which must be admitted by every sober and intelligent Deist (for against that Species of Unbelievers only is it that the great Evidences for reveal'd Religion are directly conclusive) I shewed by an Induction of Particulars, that all the successive Revelations contained in the Bible, when tried by this Rule, are found to be genuine, and worthy of all rational Men to be received.

I am now therefore to consider and answer such Objections as may be started against this Rule, or the Application of it to the Religion of the Bible.

The great Basis on which our Rule for distinguishing true from forged Revelations rests, is the evident Absurdity of the contrary Supposition ; that it is reconcileable with the Wisdom, the Justice, and the Goodness

ness of God, tamely to permit Religions, forged under his Name, to be obtruded and imposed upon Mankind by Virtue of such Miracles, as usually pass with them for certain Testimonies of the divine Approbation,

But some perhaps may think so shocking a Supposition would not be the necessary Consequence of rejecting our Rule. They may deny that God is bound to disavow all forged Revelations, tho' confirmed by many and wonderful Signs, by others still more wonderful. They may tell us, that the common Reason of Men will enable them to distinguish whether a Revelation be worthy of God or not; and that therefore, when any one is seduced to a false Religion, merely because it is miraculously vouched for, such a Man deceives himself; that God, who gave him his Reason to secure him from Error, will in this Case be acquitted of all Blame, tho' he should interpose no other way to detect the Forgery. All Men they would tell us are agreed, that if an immoral Religion should be preached up, no Miracles would be sufficient to recommend it. And thence they would argue, that God, with a Salvo to all his Attributes, might sometimes, for a

Trial of his Creatures, permit the Opposers of a true, or the Preachers of a false Religion to give stronger sensible Proofs of a divine Mission, than his true Messengers do, whose Doctrines carry a better, *i. e.* a rational Evidence along with them. Upon the whole, they would conclude therefore that Miracles uncontroll'd, or superior to all Opposition, are not absolute Proofs in this Case; but that the Internals of every Religion must appear unexceptionable, before it is capable of being proved by Miracles.

But here I deny that it is at all consistent with the Goodness of God to suffer, that even Doctrines, manifestly immoral, should, in any Instance, be universally recommended to the World by unopposed or superior Miracles. For admitting that Men of improved Understandings and subdued Passions, might be above all Danger of giving into immoral Doctrines, however confirmed; yet how small a Proportion do these bear to the Bulk of Mankind? And what, in such a Case, must become of the rest? The Objection therefore, above urged, can be of no Force against us, till it be first proved, that God is bound to take care only of Philosophers,

phers, and that he is under no Obligation to adapt the Means of securing the World from the most dangerous Errors, to the common Capacity and Condition of Men: For nothing is more universally observable in the common Run of People, than their strong Attachment to whatever affects their Senses, and their Aversion to mere Reasoning, be it upon the most indifferent Subjects. We may easily guess therefore how coldly the Generality of Men would attend to a spiritual Religion, on account of its intrinsic Goodness, should another at the same time court their Approbation, which, besides its Support from many unrival'd Miracles, proposed to unchain their Lusts, and indulge their Passions. In short, Reason, as it is exercised by most Men, would never be able to turn the Scale in Favour of Morality against Libertinism thus recommended. We ought not therefore to suppose, that God, in the Government of the World, ever acts upon a Presumption, that is contradicted by daily Observation. He is too good to suffer the illiterate and the sensual, who are a great Majority of Mankind, to be tempted beyond their Strength; too gracious to give leave,

that immoral Doctrines should have such glaring Vouchers; and too wise to trust so dangerous a Deception among Men, that are but in few Instances able to hold out against the natural Blandishments of Vice.

But perhaps to all this will be opposed the famous Passage of *Deuteronomy*, Chap. xiii. ver. 1, 2, 3. where *Moses* says: *If there arise among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee saying, Let us go after other Gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the Words of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of Dreams. For the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your Heart, and with all your Soul.*

From hence it may be concluded, that if it is reasonable in God to try his Creatures, nay his very chosen People, by permitting the very worst of Impieties to be broached among them by a Prophet armed with Signs and Wonders; then uncontroll'd Miracles ought not singly to be deemed a Criterion for distinguishing the Truth of a Revelation.

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But it ought here carefully to be observed, that the Exhortation to Idolatry, spoken of by *Moses*, is supposed to be confirmed only by one Sign or Wonder; whereas the standing Precept among the *Jews*, who only are concerned in the Supposition before us, against Idolatry, had the Sanction of very many and surprizing Wonders. When ever therefore a Miracle should be done among that People, in Favour of Idolatry, it could not be esteemed uncontroll'd, as having been opposed by others, that were superior at least for Number. So that this Case, when rightly considered, confirms instead of weakening our Rule; because it is an Instance of the Truth's being supported by higher miraculous Evidence, than was proposed to attend on Falsehood. Besides, if God, permitting evil Spirits to practise upon his People, would not allow them to work more than one Sign in favour of a single Immorality, and such a one too as contradicted natural Piety, as well as standing Revelation; an Immorality that corresponded to none of the Passions or Interests of corrupt Nature; this helps us to conceive how unlikely it is, that God would at any time suffer many and unri-

val'd Miracles to attend on a Religion, that taught Immoralities grateful to inordinate Appetite. In a Word, if he would not give leave that the *Israelites* should be tempted by a single Sign or Wonder, to so absurd a Piece of Wickedness as Idolatry and Polytheism, without leaving amongst them an express Precaution of it; how can we think he would ever rely so far upon the Sufficiency of human Prudence in general, as to leave Men singly at the Mercy of more specious Falsehoods, and those too supported after the most wonderful Manner? Since therefore God never did, nor ever can permit immoral Doctrines to be vouched for by Miracles unrivall'd, or Paramount to all Competition; such Miracles must be allowed singly to determine the Genuineness of every Revelation, to which they avouch.

But besides Rules for moral Behaviour, a Revelation may contain Points of Faith: And these latter having no Foundation of Truth and Certainty in themselves, as the former have, must be credited wholly upon the Strength of external Evidenc to the Truth of that Religion, whereof they are a Part. Should therefore God permit false Speculations

tions to be confirmed by many, great and unopposed Wonders, the only Motives to Credibility would lye on the wrong Side of the Question, and Error would be unavoidable. In such Instances therefore above all others, God seems obliged, by the necessary Perfections of his Nature, to distinguish Truth from Falsehood ; which can only be done by giving his Attestation of superior Miracles. But the Christian Religion, which contains both moral and preternatural Doctrines, is plainly marked with this Characteristick of Divine Truths. For it was confirmed by many Miracles of a most surprizing Kind, and such as opposed it never produced the like, either for Number or Greatness. If therefore the Miracles of the Gospel were certain Facts, they singly and undeniably prove against Deists, that Christianity came from God.

And that these Miracles were really done, is as certain as the most unexceptionable Evidence can make any past Fact whatever. For the Wonders wrought by our Lord, especially those of his Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven, were, from the very Time of their Operation, constantly and uniformly attested

tested to by Men who wanted no Qualities, that use to procure Credit to Witnesses. The Facts testified they beheld with their Eyes, or handled with their Hands, or both : And they were the proper Objects of Sight and Feeling. They could not therefore be deceived in the Subject of their Testimony themselves : Nor does it appear that they had either Inclination or Interest to serve, by deceiving others. For the Witnesses were Persons, for ought that appears, of undoubted Probity : And their Testimony had nothing in it that could invite even Knaves to bear it falsely. Poverty and Persecution, even unto Death, were the only Views that rationally presented themselves to those who should, either right or wrong, attest to those wonderful Facts. And when these Things actually overtook them, these Witnesses to the Miracles of the Gospel behaved like Men, who preferred the Truth to every other Consideration ; not one of them shrunk from his first Confession, but each of them appeared inflexibly steady to his Evidence, at no Time contradicting either himself or his Fellows. Lastly, most of these Men died Martyrs to their Testimony, sealing it with their Blood,
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and repeating it with their last Breath. It is confessed, that some Men have done all this for false and monstrous Opinions: But then such Instances have been exceeding rare. Scarce one in an Age has appeared so unaccountably prodigal of his Life and Fame. Whereas, if the Evidence concerning our Lord's Resurrection was false, many Hundreds of the same Age and Nation must have concurred in these infatuated Measures, which is by no Means credible. If therefore the Testimony of Witnesses every Way competent both for Number, Probity and Constancy, may be not only called In Question, but even rejected; we must henceforth set it up for a Maxim to disbelieve every Thing, to which we have not the Evidence of our own Senses; which would not only destroy the Belief of Religion and a Life to come, but also take from us most of the Comforts and Enjoyments of this.

Besides, as the Testimony in the Behalf of these Facts is unquestionable in itself: so no counter Evidence appears against them. No one Person living in or near the Age of the Gospel, pretends to question the Truth of its Miracles, either upon his own Knowledge,

or the Information of others. But, on the other Hand, some of the earliest Antichristian Writers among the *Pagans* own the Miracles of Jesus, and account for them by Magick. The *Jews* likewise, in their *Talmud*, enumerate and allow most of the Wonders recorded in the *New Testament* to be true. Can any Facts then be better or more triumphantly supported than these, which rest on the joint Testimony of Friends and Enemies? And what a hopeful Task have the present Set of Unbelievers taken in Hand, who, at at the Distance of seventeen hundred Years, are labouring to discredit such Facts, as had been confessed by the Synagogue and the Schools of Philosophy within an Age or two after they happened. And after all, should this seemingly impracticable Attempt of theirs succeed, they themselves would thereby undesignedly furnish Christianity with an unquestionable Miracle, equal to all the rest which they are endeavouring to take from us. For the vast Progress of the Gospel upon the first preaching of it, unaided by Miracles, would, as St. *Chrysostom* with great Judgment observes, have been in itself the greatest of all Miracles. That People of e-
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very Age, Sex and Complexion, barely upon the Preaching of a few poor and mostly illiterate Men, should on a sudden every where give up their Prejudices and Passions, renounce all their Vices and Errors, and become, at their own utmost Peril, Converts to a new and self-denying Religion: This, I say, would have been a greater Miracle in the moral World, than those of the Gospel were in that of Nature. This is no hasty or arbitrary Assertion. For Experience discovers to us the ordinary Power of Persuasion, at least as exactly, as it does the Laws of Nature and the Force of second Causes. In short, the Renitency of Pride and vicious Habits, and Self-Love, jointly acting on the Minds of Men is so great, as to be insuperable by mere Reasoning, how clear or cogent soever. The Propagation therefore of the Gospel, without the Aid of Miracles, could not possibly have been carried on so speedily and so universally, without the extraordinary Interposition of the Divine Power some other Way. And 'tis the same Thing to the Argument before us, whether God owns a Revelation for his, by a visible Suspension of moral or of natural Causes.

Thus we see, that the Evidence for the Fact of Miracles is as strong, as can be had for past Events so remote from the present Times. But because human Testimony is in its own Nature fallible, we are told, that the Evidence of Miracles is only probable: And this with weak or inconsiderate Men passes for no small Disparagement. They do not know, or do not recollect, that the Proof of most Facts, on the Strength whereof the Lives and Fortunes of Men are daily disposed of, rests upon Evidence not at all more probable, than that which supports the Truth and Reality of the Gospel Miracles. When therefore the Enemies of Christianity call our Lord or his Apostles the supposed Doers of Miracles, the Christian Cause suffers no more by it, than legal Determinations would, if Persons convicted of Murder, upon the like fallible Testimony, should be contemptuously stiled supposed Murderers; or Claimants put in Possession of controverted Estates upon probable Evidence of Right and Title thereto, should be called the supposed rightful Possessors thereof. In these and all other necessary Questions, common Sense and constant Practice obliges Men to decide for
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S E R M O N II. 31

that Part, which carries the highest Probability, tho' short of Certainty: And the Truth of any proposed Revelation, being at least as necessary to be determined, as any other Cause or Controversy whatever, must submit to the same Rules of Judgment; must, where better Evidence cannot be had, rest upon strong and probable, tho' fallible Evidence.

This is said upon a Supposition, that the Belief of the Gospel Miracles had no other nor better Foundation, than human Testimony, considered in itself. But I will be bold to say, that such Evidence, in the Case before us, as it strongly and unexceptionably attests to the Truth of a Divine Revelation, gives us the highest moral Certainty and Assurance of the Truth of that Revelation: Because, had it been false and forged, God seems obliged in Justice, both to himself and to us, to have perpetuated some Counter-Evidence thereto, enough to have justified a reasonable Man in withholding, or at least in suspending his Assent to the Truth of those wonderful Facts. It is not pretended that God is, in all Cases, bound to secure his Creatures from Deception by forged Accounts of Things
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antiently done. Such Frauds may innocently be suffered to obtain Credit by the Strength of uniform and uncontradicted Testimony, in which the Honour of God, and the Happiness of Men are little or no Way concerned. But it would be intolerable to suppose, that God, who is the Fountain of Justice and Truth, is free to suffer Narratives of Miracles forged for the Support of a Counterfeit Revelation from himself, to pass, for seventeen Centuries, not only uncontradicted, but, for a great Part of that Time, attested to and allowed on all Hands. If the Miracles reported in the *New Testament* to have been publicly wrought, had been false, there were Thousands in those Days able and willing to have contradicted them, and to have transmitted Memoirs of their Falseness to Posterity. That God therefore, if Things had been so, should be utterly unconcerned for the Honour of his Name, and not perpetuate and preserve to us any one Man's Testimony to this Purpose, is absurd and incredible. Rather than so vile an Indignity to the Supreme Being should, through the supposed Loss or Suppression of antient Records, pass undetected, it were reasonable to expect,

expect, that even the Stones out of the Walls should be made to speak, and turn Evidences for God against the Religious Imposture. Of this I am sure, that none of the false and fabulous Religions, that have deceived Mankind in any Part or Age of the World, have either been really confirmed by the Sanction of superior Miracles, or by the Report of such Things conveyed down by unanimous Tradition, though such Religions might with more Safety have been trusted with these strong Credentials, by Reason of their intrinsic Pravity and Absurdity.

Since therefore God, in his Providence, has ordered no Counter-Testimonies concerning the miraculous Facts of the Gospel to come down to our Hands, whilst so many antient and valuable Evidences to the Truth and Certainty of those Facts yet subsist, we may depend upon it, that they were incontestable, and beyond all Contradiction; otherwise, as sure as God governs the World, and is an Enemy to all Religious Impostors, that abuse his sacred Name by prefixing it to their own Forgeries, he would not have left the Fraud impenetrable, by permitting not a single Record of Antiquity to remain, that might contribute to the Detection of it. All

that we can gather from the Remains of *Celsus Porphyry* and *Julian* is, that they misunderstood or misrepresented Christianity; whilst they furnish us not so much as with a Suspicion, that the Miracles, said to have been wrought in Favour of it, were false, or even doubtful.

In one Word, as it is impossible, that God should suffer the Age, in which Counterfeit Religions first appear, to be deceived by seeing uncontrolled or superior Miracles really done in their Behalf: So is it equally incredible, that he would permit Posterity to lye under invincible Prepossession in favour of false Reports about such Things, by uncontradicted Testimony, and the fullest Evidence of Truth, that in any like Case can be wisht for or desired. The Miracles therefore of the Gospel were real Facts, and when admitted to be such, prove it beyond all reasonable Contradiction to be the Gospel of God.

S E R M O N III.

J O H N XX. *Ver. 31.*

But these Signs are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have Life thro' his Name.

HITHERTO I have been employed in laying down a Rule, whereby to judge safely and certainly, when it is that Miracles singly, and without any other Help, prove a Religion to be from God, upon the Principles and Concessions of Deists themselves, and in justifying the Religion of the Bible, as agreeable to this Rule of Judgment. I have also answered such Objections, as I thought would probably be offered against this Rule : I have likewise in Part shewn the Expediency of considering Miracles in this Light. And because this Point deserves a larger Discussion, I shall here crave your Patience, whilst I do more particularly enumerate the Advantages of the present

Method towards the Discovery of the Truth, which should equally recommend it to Infidels and Believers, who alike pretend that to be the great End of all their Debates and Inquiries.

I think it is universally allowed, that the most eligible of all Proofs are those, which proceed upon the fewest and clearest Principles: Plainly, because they bring us most speedily and most certainly to a Conclusion. And when the Question in Debate is of universal Concern, the more concise the Proof is, the more accommodate it becomes to those who need it, the Generality of whom have neither Time to consider, Memory to retain, nor Capacity to penetrate long and laborious Processes in Reasoning. But Religion is the Concern, and the most important Interest of Mankind in general. In such a Case therefore, to make them rational Believers, to furnish them with the Reason of the Hope that is in them, in a Method adequate to their Understandings, and every Way adapted to their Circumstances, is to them of the utmost Service at all Times; but now more especially, when the Partizans for Irreligion are busy in corrupting and seducing every Rank of Men for their Steadiness in the Christian Faith.

S E R M O N III. 37

Faith. And even Persons of Leisure and higher Improvements must find their Account in that Method of Proof, which brings the Merits of Religion to the speediest Issue. For no sober Person would chuse long to continue in Suspence, and under Uncertainty, about an Affair of such high Consequence, but would be glad to stand on sure Grounds, whilst he receives the Charge of Infidel Cavils against his Christian Faith and Hopes. Being assured that his Labour is not in vain in the Lord, he goes on with Chearfulness in his Christian Duty, and calmly considers every Objection against it, as as Matter of Curiosity, and an Exercise of his Parts only. If he can solve and clearly answer it, he has the Satisfaction to find the same Truth in the Particulars of Revelation, which he had before an Assurance of in general. And if, which is hardly to be supposed, he meets with some Difficulties insuperable and inexplicable, he sees no Cause to think worse of Religion on that Score ; but fairly resolves it into his own Ignorance, or the accidental Loss of some Helps that are necessary to the Illustration of the Subject. And for so doing, he stands justified by the Evidence of plain and common Sense. For as, on the one

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38 S E R M O N III.

Hand, what remains doubtful or disputable, is not therefore in any Case to be given up, as absolutely false : So on the other, there is not any one Maxim more clear than this, that whenever there is moral Certainty for the Truth of a Revelation in general, it cannot really be faulty or fallacious in any of its Particulars, whatever Suspicions or Appearances there may be of such Things. A Christian Believer, therefore, previously convinced of the Truth of his Religion by the Argument proposed from superior or unrival'd Miracles, tho' at any Time perplexed with Difficulties and Objections, has no Reason to give up, or even to suspend his Faith on that Account ; being still as fully assured that they are in themselves false and ill grounded, as he is that God is true. I speak not this, as allowing that there are, or have been, any Objections to the Truth of the Christian Religion, but what may be fairly and effectually answered ; but only on a Supposition, that there were any such, and to shew, that at all Adventures it is safest for us to build our Faith on some Proof, that, with the highest moral Certainty, and on the fewest and most indisputable Principles, concludes for the divine Authority of the Gospel Revelation

tion in general: And such is that, drawn from the great and uncontrolled Miracles wrought in Confirmation of it.

The Signs and Wonders performed by our Lord and his Followers, considered as Miracles in general, prove with a good Degree of Strength that God assisted them; so that *Nicodemus* had Reason for concluding, that *Jesus* was a Teacher come from God: Because no Man could do the Miracles that he did, except God were with him. It is, for Instance, scarce credible that any Power, short of infinite, could instantaneously restore lost Senses and perished Limbs, much less could raise dead Men to Life again. But still as we are not able, with sufficient Exactness, to fix the Boundaries between infinite and the highest finite Powers; so we cannot absolutely say and determine, that God alone was able to effect any of the Miracles recorded in the New Testament. And hence has arisen great Perplexity in defining a Miracle, so as to ascertain what shall be deemed Divine, contradistinct from diabolical Prodigies. But in the Method before us, we have no Difficulty of this Kind upon our Hands. Sufficient it is for the Purpose of our Rule, to set down for a Miracle whatever exceeds

40 S E R M O N III.

human Power and Contrivance : Because it is incompatible with the Divine Perfections, to suffer any such Appearances to vouch for a forged Revelation without Controll. And hence we become as thoroughly convinced, that Devils did not effect any of the Miracles done in Confirmation of the Gospel Religion, as we are that Men could not effect them. To the Finger of God therefore are they alone imputable. Another Advantage peculiar to the Method of distinguishing, when it is that Miracles prove the Truth and Certainty of a Revelation, is, that it proceeds upon few and plain Principles, such as are known to all, and disputed by none but Atheists and Epicurean Deists. These are, that there is a God ; that he is an Enemy to Falshood ; that he loves Mankind, and is unwilling they should be seduced into erroneous Persuasions concerning him and the Duty they owe to him ; that he knows the Frailty and Ignorance of the Generality of his Creatures ; how prone they are to mistake from the mere Sophistry of cunning and deceitful Men ; and consequently how irresistible such Deceivers must prove, when they are further armed with miraculous Powers ; that God is also just to himself, and jealous
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S E R M O N III. 41

of his own Honour, which must suffer to the highest Degree, if he ever permitted evil Spirits to counterfeit the highest Sanctions he can possibly give to his own revealed Truths, and thereby impose their own Delusions upon Mankind for Messages and Commands from Heaven. Lastly, that every such Imposture must happen thro' his Connivance, who knows all Things, and who is able at all times to restrain the most powerful of the fallen Angels from exerting their natural Strength to purposes that he dislikes. These are few and plain, from which the Ignorant, as well as the Learned, can easily discern how absurd it is to suppose, that a Revelation can be false or forged, which, like the Gospel one, has the Attestation of wonderful and uncontrolled Miracles. The Internals of such a Religion may be taken upon Content, and every Cavil against them may, without Examination, be looked on as groundless and frivolous.

It appears then, that all the necessary Inquiry into the Merits of any Religion, that is confirmed by Miracles, lies within a very moderate Compass, and that Men of ordinary Capacities may by this Means become rational Believers, have Comfort and Satisfaction

faction of Mind, and true Conscience towards God, without the endless and fruitless Pains of examining every Objection that has been, or hereafter may be started by the Enemies of the Christian Faith. And were those unhappy Persons really Lovers of Truth, a Distinction with which they are ready, on all Occasions, to dignify themselves, they would, setting aside at least all Debate about the Internals of Christianity, join Issue with us fairly and impartially upon this short Question; Whether Miracles, so circumstantiated as those of the Gospel are, can possibly deceive us in the Choice of, and Search after, a true Revelation? If those singly and alone will guide us to the Bible for an infallible Rule of Faith and Practice, to what purpose are all their scrupulous Inquiries, and the Difficulties urged by them against that sacred Book? What Conduct can be either more absurd or more impious than theirs is, to leave us in Possession of undoubted Evidence from Miracles, that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and spend their whole Endeavours in finding Fault with the Internals of it? Is not this a barefaced Opposition to their Maker? Is it not carrying on an avowed Quarrel with the Divine Wisdom,

S E R M O N III. 43.

Wisdom, Goodness, and Truth? In short, these Men seem to treat the Almighty with as little Ceremony as they do *Euclid* or *Archimedes*, being determin'd not to give Credit to his Writings for his own Sake, and rejecting every thing, the Truth or Expediency of which is inevident to them.

And this Censure of them, however harsh it may seem, is not unjust, nor consequently uncharitable. Some of the Advocates for Unbelief do little less than avow the Charge; and those, who are more cautious, become liable thereto, from the direct Tendency of their Reasonings.

A celebrated Writer of this Sort, some Years ago, from a thorough Sense of the Weight the Argument for Christianity, from Miracles, carried with it, and that if once admitted, as a fundamental Proof thereof, would invincibly prove it to be from God, in spite of all the Difficulties and Cavils rais'd about the Internals of that Religion, undertook to shew, that it rested solely on this Bottom, that a Messias was marked out in the Old Testament, and that Jesus was therein marked out for the Messias. He would persuade us, that on this Footing alone Jesus claimed the Obedience of Mankind to his

44 S E R M O N III.

his Person and Doctrines. Having then, as he vainly imagined, undermined this Foundation, he considers Miracles, not as they really are, the great Corner-Stone of the Christian Fabrick, but only as subsidiary Proofs to supply Defects in the Foundation of the Gospel as he had laid it ; and accordingly rejects them as of no avail to that Purpose. His Words are these.

“ Nor can Miracles, said to be wrought
 “ by Jesus and his Apostles in behalf of
 “ Christianity, avail any thing in the Case :
 “ For Miracles can never render a Founda-
 “ tion valid, that is in itself invalid ; can
 “ never make a false Inference true ; can
 “ never make a Prophecy fulfilled, which is
 “ not fulfilled ; and can never mark out a
 “ Messias or Jesus for the Messias, if both
 “ are not marked out in the Old Testa-
 “ ment.”

All which is very true, but quite besides the Purpose.

For *First*, No one ever advanced that Miracles, only said to be wrought by Jesus and his Apostles, would prove any thing at all. No, the Miracles we argue from, as singly evincing the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Religion, were Miracles really wrought

S E R M O N III. 45

wrought by the Founder of it, and his immediate Followers: And the Evidence we have for those Facts is so compleat, that, if we disbelieve it, we must reject all traditionary Testimony whatever, and Credit nothing but what our own Senses inform us of: An Absurdity much more apparent, than is the Weakness and Invalidity of that Foundation, which this Writer hath laid for the Christian Religion to rest solely upon.

Secondly, We freely own, that the Miracles really wrought by Jesus and his Apostles, would not avail to make good the Grounds and Reasons of Christianity, as he has stated and represented them. It is by no Means pretended, that the Miracles of the Gospel can reconcile Contradictions, or make Absurdities credible: But still we affirm, that the Miracles of our Lord and his Apostles avail to justify the Truth of every thing they advanced, and particularly the Application of Prophecies in the Old Testament, as fulfilled by Christ in the New; for they prove, that what they spake concerning such Matters, they spake by Commission from God. Altho' therefore such mighty Credentials cannot make false Inferences in the Gospel to be true, nor make Prophecies, therein applied to
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Jesus, to have been fulfilled, which were not fulfilled ; yet they effectually prove it to be worthy of all Acceptation, because they render all Charges of this Kind, in the Nature of the Thing, to be impossible : For God, who cannot lie, confirmed all that Jesus and his Apostles infer'd from the Old Testament, by superior Miracles, as certainly as if he had himself uttered them in the openest and most indubitable Manner. Suppose then, that this latter had really been the Case : That God, instead of speaking to the World the Substance of his Gospel by Signs and Wonders, had uttered it with his own tremendous Voice, and afterwards written it with his own Finger, as his standing Word to all future Generations : And all this, after so convincing a Fashion, that this Writer himself should be satisfied it came from the Mouth of God. I say, supposing all this, might not he set it all aside, as he does the Efficacy of Miracles, and say, with equal Truth and more Pertinence, that God himself can never render a Foundation valid, that is in itself invalid ; can never make a false Inference true ; can never make a Prophecy fulfilled, that is not fulfilled ; and can never mark out a Messiah or Jesus for the
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Messias, if both are not marked out in the Old Testament. And would such Reasoning pass upon any Man of Sense or Piety? In such a Case surely common Modesty would rather induce a frail and fallible Creature to suspect his own Judgment concerning the Validity of Jesus's Claim to the Messiahship, than to oppose his own Surmises against express Declarations from Heaven. In a Word, Miracles, circumstantiated like those of the Gospel, are to all Intents and Purposes the Voice of God, approving and confirming every Claim therein set up, every Inference there made, and every Prophecy there applied : And therefore, till the Enemies of it can fairly disprove the Fact of Miracles, in arguing against the Contents of the New Testament, they fight against God, charge him with Inconsequencies and false Constructions of what he himself, at sundry Times, and in diverse Manner, spake in Time past by his Prophets.

It must be confessed, that the Writer above-mentioned does not admit the Miracles of the Gospel to be unquestionable Facts ; but rather endeavours to fix a Suspicion upon them, from the false Claims and Reasonings, in support whereof they are said to have been

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48 S E R M O N III.

wrought. His Words are these : “ Miracles said to be wrought, may be often justly deemed false Reports, when attributed to Persons, who claim an Authority from the Old Testament, which they impertinently alledge to support their Pretences. God, *adds he*, can never be supposed often to permit Miracles to be done in Confirmation of a false or pretended Mission.”

What Pity it is that this Writer did not see, that as God could not be supposed often to permit Miracles to be done in Confirmation of a false or pretended Mission, as little is it to be supposed, that he should permit the false Report of Miracles, in such a Cause, to obtain even in the Times and Countries where they are said to have been wrought, and to pass down to our Days, without the least Interruption or Contradiction from Counter-Evidence of any Kind. The speedy Propagation of the Christian Religion, allowing it to have had the Attestation of real Miracles, not only without, but even against Force, as well as universal Prejudice and Corruption, has always been thought a most surprizing Revolution in the moral World. But by this Man’s Account, the Wonders of that Event are infinitely heightened : For, according to him, the whole World ran after a Claim

Claim manifestly impertinent in itself, and unsupported by every Motive to Credibility. They left their Ease, forfeited their Honours and wordly Interests, and embarked in a Cause, that had every thing which could terrify Men from it, and nothing to invite them. Nay, more than this, they succeeded to a Miracle in so defenceless a Scheme; and they, who, we are told, claimed an Authority from the Old Testament, which they impertinently alledged to support their Pretences, notwithstanding carried all before them, and got the better of every ruling Religion. In spite of Imperial Edicts, in spite of ten bloody Persecutions, and the joint Opposition made to it by the Learning and Philosophy of those Ages, the false and pretended Mission of Christ, as the Unbeliever calls it, found an universal Reception. All these Absurdities, all these Impossibilities, and more than these, must that Man take up with, who affirms, that the Miracles said to be wrought by Jesus and his Apostles, in behalf of Christianity, were false Reports. Whereas, on the other Hand, nothing is more easy to account for, than the Mistakes of fallible and prejudiced Men against the Validity of Christian Foundations, and the right Appli-

50 S E R M O N III.

cation of ancient Prophecies. In a Word, the Credibility of the Gospel-Miracles rests, as other unquestionable Facts, do upon the fullest positive Evidence, as well as the strongest Presumptions. Either, therefore, they are to be believed, or nothing is to be believed: Either the speedy Propagation of Christianity throughout the World is that way to be accounted for, or it will be impossible to explain that surprizing Event: But it must remain the greatest of all Miracles, and the profoundest of all Mysteries.

S E R M O N IV.

JOHN XX. 31.

But these Signs are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life through his Name.

I HAVE, as I hope, sufficiently proved, that the Signs or Wonders wrought by Jesus and his Apostles, and written in the New Testament, are Evidences that answer the Purpose, for which St. *John*, in my Text, affirms they were written, *viz.* that Men might believe that Jesus is the Christ. I have shewn, that in the Nature of the Thing they prove, that the Christian Religion came from God : But, as I hinted in my last Discourse, the Enemies of that Religion being too sensible of this, have endeavoured to elude the Force of the Argument from Miracles, by advancing that it was not made the Ground and Reason of the Gospel-Revelation by our Lord and his Apostles, who

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built it on a different Bottom, *viz.* that Jesus was the Messiah foretold, and marked out in the Old Testament. Insinuating that, if upon Inquiry, this proves an incompetent and precarious Foundation, the Superstructure cannot stand : That in such a Case, therefore, Miracles would come too late to do it any Service, unless they had the Power of reconciling Contradictions, of making a Foundation good, which in itself is weak and sandy. They seem to reproach us, as endeavouring to lay a new Foundation for the Christian Religion, different from that which was laid by the great Teacher of it ; or rather that, being sensible he had established his Gospel upon feeble Grounds, we are forced to make use of Miracles as Props and Buttresses to support the tottering Superstructure. But whoever looks into the New Testament itself, will find that these Men have utterly mis-stated and misrepresented the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion ; which, though it receives Light and Strength from the preceding *Jewish* Scriptures, is not made to rest, as we are told, solely thereon, but is at least equally built upon the Attestation of Miracles : So that in defending Christianity, we take no other Method than what its divine Founder did ; we proceed exactly on the
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S E R M O N I V. 53

the same Grounds with him, to wit, Miracles and Prophecies.

To evince then, that Miracles are not only in themselves rational Proofs, or Inducements, to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; but also that they are appealed to by our Lord himself and his Disciples, as such, shall be the Business and Aim of this Discourse.

Our blessed Lord, for Reasons not hard to come at, during the greatest Part of his Ministry industriously avoided, in his Conversations with the unbelieving *Jews*, owning his Character as the Messias. The great Point he laboured to convince them of, with respect to himself, was, that he came from God ; that he was sent by him, and that the Doctrines he published were not his own, but the Words of him that sent him. This general Persuasion concerning him, wherever it prevailed, must gain the Belief of every particular Doctrine delivered by him ; and among the rest of his Messiahship, when a proper Time should come for opening and avowing that grand Distinction between him and other divinely commissioned Teachers : But for this Reason it ought not to be expected, that we should alledge many Instances, wherein

our Saviour appealed to Miracles, as direct and exprefs Proofs of his Messiahship; and we prove that Point sufficiently, if we make out, that he lodged such Appeals in behalf of his divine Mission in general: Because, as I said before, that once admitted, every particular Claim of his must be admitted in Consequence of it.

And of this we have clear and most abundant Proof, *e. g.* *I have* (saith our Lord, *John v. ver. 36.*) *greater witness than that of John: For the Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* I think no doubt can remain with any one, whether by Works in this Passage, we are to understand Miracles or no: This being the constant Sense of the Word in St. *John's* Gospel. However, that hereby Miracles were not meant under the *Notion* merely of Prophecies fulfilled, is evident from what follows. For in *ver. 39.* he makes the Testimony of the *Jewish* Scriptures a distinct Witness in his Behalf. Again, *John xv. ver. 24.* Jesus declares, that *if he had not done among the unbelieving Jews the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin.* Was this

this the Language of one, that rested the Credit of his divine Mission and Character wholly on Proofs from the Old Testament? Does it not rather follow from hence, that, in our Lord's Judgment, if he had been ever so plainly marked out for the Messiah in the Old Testament; yet unless Miracles, like those performed by him, had likewise vouched for his Claim, the Incredulity of the *Jews* had been somewhat excusable? From whence we cannot but conclude, that Miracles, in the Opinion of Wisdom and Truth itself, were a stronger Evidence of divine Inspiration than Prophecy: For nothing can render the Sin of Incredulity most inexcusable, but resisting the strongest Motives to Conviction.

But besides these, there are Passages in which our Lord, with sufficient Plainness, appeals to his Miracles, as Arguments evincing him to be the Christ. Thus, in the 10th Chap. of St. *John's* Gospel, when *the Jews* came round about our Saviour, and said unto him, *How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.* His Answer, ver. 25. is; *The Works that I do in my Father's Name, they bear witness of me.* If he did not intend the *Jews* should hereby understand, that his Works were a Testimony

56 S E R M O N IV.

to his being the Christ, this Answer had no Degree of Pertinence in it. And further on, in the same Chapter, in Proof of his being the Son of God, he argues from his Miracles singly. *If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the Works.* If any one inquires, what Connexion there is between our Saviour's being the Son of God and the Messiah, that the former, in both of the above-mentiond Passages, is used as a Medium to prove the latter: I should answer, *First*, That, according to the Opinion and Expectation of the *Jews*, Messiah was to attain the utmost Pitch of prophetick Dignity and Character; so that when our Saviour asserted himself to be the Son of God, they might easily collect the Messiahship went along with that high Claim. *Secondly*, The second Psalm was interpreted of Messiah by the *Jews*; and therein the Lord is introduced, as saying unto his Anointed: *Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee.* When therefore Jesus affirmed that he was the Son of God, it must convey to every intelligent *Jew* a plain Intimation, that he claimed to be the Christ. And if any one should ask further, why our Lord rather insinuated

sinuated than openly declared this Part of his Character? The Answer is obvious, that an Avowal, and a plain Declaration of his being the Messiah, would have exposed him to Violence and Death, sooner than he could finish the great Work of his Ministry. He scrupled not to call himself the Son of God early in his Preaching; because, though the *Jews* exclaimed against that as Blasphemy, yet it was not likely that the *Roman* Government would put any one to Death for a Crime, which was Capital by the *Jewish* Law only. But he knew that the Title of Messiah would be improved into an Article of Treason by the *Jews* his Enemies, and would awaken the Jealousy of the *Romans*; for which Reason, till his Hour was near at Hand, when by divine Designation he was to be given up into the Hands of Sinners, he cautiously avoided furnishing his Enemies with Evidence that he expressly made himself the Christ. So monstrous is the Assertion of the Writer, so often mentioned in the Beginning of his Work, that Jesus claimed the Obedience and Submission of Mankind to him and his Doctrines, as he was the Messiah promised and predicted in the Old Testament.

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But to proceed ; in the 11th and 12th Chap. of St. *John*, ver. 14, 15. our Lord intending to go and raise *Lazarus* from the Dead, told his Disciples plainly that *Lazarus was dead* ; adding, *and I am glad for your Sakes, that I was not there, to the Intent ye may believe.* From which it is plain, that our Lord makes Miracles one great Evidence of his being worthy to be believed ; and that he was far from thinking his own Mission ought to rest solely, or even principally, upon the Prophecies of the Old Testament, which were fulfilled in him. He was therefore glad of an Opportunity to perform a Miracle of the highest and most astonishing Kind. He had often healed the Sick ; but never, till in the Instance of *Lazarus*, had he raised one to Life again, who had been four Days dead. Once more, when the Scribes and Pharisees, in the 5th of St. *Luke*, secretly charged Jesus with Blasphemy, for saying to the Paralytick, *thy Sins be forgiven thee* ; what Argument does he use to shew, that he had not exceeded his Commission ? Does he for that Purpose appeal to the Old Testament ? No ; but still, as on many other Occasions, to the great and commanding Evidence of Miracles. *That ye may know,*

S E R M O N IV. 59

he, *that the Son of Man hath Power upon Earth to forgive Sins*, He said unto the Sick of the Palsy, *I say unto thee, Arise; and take up thy Bed, and go into thine House.* Upon which it follows, *that immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own House glorifying God.* The By-Standers hereupon waiting for no further Justification of what our Lord had done, were all amazed, glorifying God: They were filled with Fear, saying, *We have seen strange Things to Day.*

As our Lord appealed to, and laid great Strefs upon Miracles, in order to prove his Mission and Character; so his immediate Followers take the very same Course, and in express Terms assert the Efficacy of that Medium, to convince Mankind of the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation in general, and their Master's Messiahship in particular.

Of this my Text is an illustrious Proof; in which St. *John* assures us, that the Signs or Wonders done by our Lord, and recorded by him, were therefore written, that Men might believe that Jesus is the Christ. So also St. *Peter*, in his first Speech to the Unbelieving

believing *Jews*, speaks of *Jesus of Nazareth*, primarily as a Man approved among them by Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs which God did by him in the midst of them; and from this Consideration enhances their Villainy, who with wicked Hands had crucified and slain him. What else was this but telling them, that God recommended *Jesus* to their Acceptance and Belief by the Power of Miracles? He does not aggravate the Crime of the *Jews*, from their murdering one whom God approved among them, by prophetick Marks of being the *Messias*, but in working Wonders by him in the midst of them. Once more *St. Mark* concludes his Gospel with this Remark: *That the Apostles went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following.* Lastly, not to multiply Instances in a Case so very plain, *St. Paul*, in the 2d Chap. of his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, says, *That God bore the first Preachers of Christianity Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost.* Nothing therefore can be more evident, if we believe our Bibles, than the Falseness of those, who, notwithstanding, would persuade us that Christianity was de-

S E R M O N IV. 61

stitute of the Proof of Miracles, and that the only Foundation of the New Testament is the Old. Had they vented such Notions in a Country, where the Scriptures were locked up from general Perusal in an unknown Tongue, the Wonder of this Attempt had been the less: But that they should ever hope to be believed in a reformed Part of the World, where the Bible is ever at Hand to do itself Justice against such palpable Misrepresentations, is principally to be accounted for from the Badness of their Cause, which can never be carried on by Methods of Truth and Soberness. May it not also be feared, that Unbelievers are in Part encouraged to make Attempts of this Kind, from observing how ignorant and uninformed the Generality of *Christians* are of the Scriptures? Surely if this be the Case, the Behaviour of our Enemies ought to make us ashamed of such scandalous Neglects, and provoke us to search into, and study the Grounds and Reasons of Christianity, as they appear in the New Testament; if for no other Reason, yet at least for this, that such, as lye in wait to deceive, may henceforward despair of putting their false Surveys upon us, and surprizing us with vain and imaginary

62 S E R M O N IV.

nary Fears about the Grounds and Reasons of our holy Religion.

But to return ; how reasonably our Lord and his Apostles acted in laying so great Strefs on Miracles, as convincing Proofs that Christianity was from God, appears from the Expectations which the *Jews* of those Times had, that *Messiah*, when he came, would work Miracles, and from their immediate Surmises, that Jesus must be he, when they saw the many mighty Works that were done by him. An Instance of this is *Nathanael*, who, tho' prejudiced against Jesus's being the Christ, from his supposed Nativity at *Nazareth*, yet upon the miraculous Discovery made by our Lord of his Name at first Sight, and of other Circumstances, with which he could not possibly be acquainted in a natural Way, the sincere Man immediately breaks out into this ample Confession, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.* This Case is the more worthy of our Attention, because the two great Evidences of Miracle and Prophecy seemed to *Nathanael* to point different Ways: Jesus manifested a preternatural Knowledge, and that strongly made for his Claim to the Messiahship: But then he, of whom *Moses*, in the Law, and the Prophets

phets did write, was to have been born at *Bethlehem*; whereas *Jesus* was represented to *Nathanael* to have been born at a different Place, a Place too proverbially noted for producing nothing that was good. In this Streight he nevertheless determined speedily on the Side of Miracle, concluding probably, that whereas the native Place of *Jesus* might be misreported to him, or the Prediction of *Micah* misunderstood by him, Miracle was the Voice and Call of God, and which therefore could not deceive him. Again, upon a Division concerning *Jesus*, whether he was the Christ or not, whilst some disbelieved it and others doubted; many, as *St. John* relates, of the People believed on him, and their Reason for so doing was this: When Christ cometh, will he do more Miracles than those which this Man hath done? From these Words it seems plain, that a Notion prevailed among the *Jews* of our Saviour's Days, that when Christ should come, he would manifest his Superiority over all the Prophets that went before him, by performing more Wonders than any of them had done. Observing therefore, that *Jesus* had already come up to this Characteristick of the Messiahship, and thinking that he could not well be outdone
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in this Respect by any who should come after him, they determined to wait no longer for that Event, but believed Jesus to be the Person. Indeed, no sooner did he begin to work Miracles in publick, but the Conversion of those about him was effected thereby, as is noted by St. *John*, Chap. ii. of his Gospel, v. 11. *This Beginning of Miracles, says he, did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory, and his Disciples believed on him.* In the following Chap. at the 23d ver. the same Evangelist relates how his Converts increased on this Account: *How when he was in Jerusalem, at the Passover in the Feast-day many believed on his Name, when they saw the Miracles which he did.* Once more in the 6th Chap. at the 2d ver. *And great Multitudes followed him, because they saw the Miracles which he did on them that were diseased.* I shall only observe further upon this Head, that the Miracles of our Lord contributed so remarkably to the Success of his Preaching, as to alarm the *Jewish* Sanhedrim, convened on Occasion of his having raised *Lazarus* from the Dead; in which they discovered, that their Fears of the Gospel prevailing, were founded solely on the Miracles done by him. What do we, say they? For
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this Man doeth many Miracles: If we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him. After so many Authorities then to prove, that both our Lord, and his Apostles, taught the Christian Religion to the *Jews* upon the Strength of Miracles, and that their Belief of him chiefly rested on that Footing; sometimes even when they were not clear, that Jesus answered to the written Marks of him in the Prophets: What are we to say or think of him, who so confidently affirmed, that Jesus, and his Apostles, ground Christianity on Proofs from the Old Testament urged in the New, and that Christianity should seem destitute of other or external Arguments? Could he, among such a Cloud of Witnesses to the contrary, find nothing to convince him that he was in the wrong? It will easily be granted him, that the Law and the Prophets are sometimes called upon, as predicting the New Covenant, and the Person who obtained it for us: But that these were the only, or the principal, Grounds of Christianity, is one of the most flagrant Untruths that ever was endeavoured to be obtruded upon the Christian World. For from what has been said it appears, that the direct Contrary to this Writer's Assertion, is little

less than the Truth : That tho' Jesus and his Apostles sometimes laboured to convince the *Jews*, out of the Scriptures, in the great Points of Christianity, and succeeded that Way ; yet much oftener, and with greater and more apparent Success, did they bring over both *Jews* and *Gentiles* to the Christian Faith, by the Argument of Miracles. To these they appeal in almost innumerable Instances : And from this Topick, without urging or express Application, did both *Jewish* and *Gentile* Beholders argue themselves into the Belief and Profession of Christianity. In a Word, Miracles, above all other Proofs, were gloried in by the first Friends and Advocates for Christianity, and most dreaded antiently, as well as in the present Times, by its Enemies.

Upon the Whole then, we find that the Proof of Christianity, from the Signs and Wonders wrought in its Behalf, as it is just and demonstrably conclusive in itself ; so it was constantly insisted on, and made the Basis of Faith by Christ and his inspired Followers. Some in our Lord's Days, as well as in ours, shut their Eyes, and hardened their Hearts against Conviction from it : For tho' Jesus had done so many Miracles before them, yet many believed not on him. But as even
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S E R M O N IV. 67

then the reasonable and sincerely disposed among the *Jews* laid aside their Prejudices, and embraced the Gospel; so will the same powerful Arguments ever prevail over serious and thinking Men, in all Times, to look on Christianity as the undoubted and gracious Direction of God to his Creatures and his Servants.

S E R M O N V.

2 P E T. i. 19.

We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take Heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-star arise in your Hearts.

IN my last Discourse I endeavoured to shew, that Miracle, as well as Prophecy, is an Argument used in the New Testament to prove the Truth and divine Origin of the Christian Religion : And consequently, that is a grievous Mistake, or else a gross Misrepresentation, in such as affirm, that Christianity is destitute of all other or external Proof, and rests wholly on Proofs and Prophecies from the Old Testament. The same Persons, at other Times, forgetting themselves, or else depending on the Forgetfulness of others, allow, that Miracles are indeed a

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Scripture

Scripture Argument for the Gospel Religion ; but contend, that Christ, and the New Testament Writers, give the Preference, in Point of Cogency, to Prophecy, and make it the stronger Evidence of the two. In Confirmation of which, they urge the Words of my Text, in which St. *Peter* affirms, that they (the Apostles) *have also a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto Christians did well that they took Heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-star arose in their Hearts.*

Here, say our Adversaries, *more sure* is a Gradation in Evidence, which must refer to some lesser Evidence preceding ; and that Lesser must here be the Miracle of the Voice at the Transfiguration immediately preceding. In order, then, thoroughly to examine this Interpretation and Application of St. *Peter's* Words, let us look back upon the foregoing Verses, to which, compared with that of my Text, the Appeal is here made.

You may please to observe, that the Apostle exhorts the Christians, to whom his 2d Epistle is addressed, *not to be content with the bare Calling to, or Profession of Christianity, but to add to their Faith Virtue, and to their Virtue Knowledge, and to Knowledge*

Temperance, and other Christian Graces; by their abounding in which, they should neither be barren nor unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Further, to bring them up in the Belief and Practice of their new Religion, he promises to put them in Remembrance of the Grounds upon which they had believed. In order to which, at the 16th ver. We have not, says he, followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were Eye-witnesses of his Majesty. For he received, adds the Apostle, from God the Father Honour and Glory, when there came such a Voice to him from the excellent Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this Voice, which came from Heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy Mount. After which follows my Text. We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take Heed, as unto a Light which shineth in a dark Place, until the Day dawn and the Day-star arise in your Hearts. If therefore, in these Words there really be a Gradation in the Evidence summed up by St. Peter in favour of the Christian Religion, the Consequence must be, that he affirms the Prophecies

phesies of the Old Testament, in his own Opinion, to be a surer Proof of Christ's divine Mission, than what he saw with his own Eyes, and heard with his own Ears from Heaven. But is such a Thing at all conceivable? Would the Apostle mean to say, that he gave greater Credit to what God spake of his Son, by the Mouth of his holy Prophets in past Ages, than to what he heard him say, with his own Mouth, from the excellent Glory? Impossible. As, in the Reason of the Thing, the inspired Author of my Text could never say such a Thing as this; so in Fact he says it not. There is, indeed, in the Words literally rendered, a Gradation, and one Thing he seems to affirm is more sure than another; but what, I pray, is that? One Evidence? No. That is an Intimation only, and not the Expression of our Apostle. *We have, says he, also a more sure Word of Prophecy.* The Gradation therefore, if any such there be, must be from a less sure Word of Prophecy beforementioned, to one that is more sure. But had *St. Peter* said any Thing at all of other Prophecy in the former Part of this *Chap.* and Epistle, that might come in Comparison with that spoken of in my Text? No, there is not so

much as an Appearance of it, either in Sound or Sense. It follows therefore, that tho' he uses a comparative Mode of Speaking, he had no Intent of comparing the Word of Prophecy; and consequently the Grounds upon which it has been surmised, that St. *Peter* compares the sure Word of Prophecy with something that proceeds, and is a less sure Evidence of Christianity, is quite set aside.

Another Reason, why it is by no Means probable that St. *Peter*, in my Text, compares the Evidence of Miracles and Prophecy, giving the Preference to the latter, is, that in Remainder of it he speaks of this more sure Word of Prophecy, in Terms utterly inconsistent with such Preference. He allows it to be a Light, and commends those who take Heed to it; but speaks of it not as a Principal, but only a subsidiary Guide, that, like a Candle in the Night, supplies our Wants till the Appearance of Day. If therefore there be really any Comparison in the Case, it seems to be not between Miracle and Prophecy, but between the inspired Books of the Old Testament and the Preaching of the Gospel; and the Preference is given not to, but against the more sure Word of Prophecy, which, in Comparison of the other, is but as
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the Light of a Candle to that of the Sun
 How unlikely therefore is it, that *St. Peter*
 should make use of such lessening Expressions
 concerning the more sure Word of Prophecy,
 if he had really just before given it the Prefe-
 rence to Miracle. This would be no better
 than trifling, thus to exalt a Subject, and a-
 gain, in the same Breath, to depress it. In a
 Word, whatever the Apostle meant by the
 more sure Word of Prophecy, or for what Rea-
 son soever he called it more sure ; this seems
 certain, that there is no Gradation of Evi-
 dence, nothing relative to any preceding
 and lesser Evidence, implied in the Words,
We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy.

If we should be asked, why *St. Peter* then
 used that comparative Way of Speaking, if
 no Comparison was at all intended by him?
 The Answer is ready, that it is no unusual
 Thing for Writers, when they express them-
 selves comparatively, to mean superlatively*.
 So that when *St. Peter* says, We have also a
 more sure Word of Prophecy, it is the same
 as if he had said, we have also a most sure
 Word of Prophecy, or a very sure Word of
 Prophecy. Or, supposing the comparative
 Sense

* See *Judges* vi. 15. where *Gideon* in the Lxx Version says, ἡ
 χιλιάς με ταπεινότερα ἢ Μοχσοῦ for ταπεινότερη.

Sense to be retained, possibly it may respect other Words of Prophecy, then received among the *Jews* upon worse Grounds ; with Regard to which the Apostle might term the Predictions of the Old Testament a more sure Word of Prophecy. And this Rationale of St. *Peter's* Language gets some Countenance from the Words following the Text, in which he seems to be assigning a Cause, why he terms the Old Testament a more sure Word of Prophecy. *Knowing this first*, says he, *that no Prophecy of the Scripture is of any private Interpretation. For the Prophecy came not of old Time by the Will of Man ; but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* As if he had said, I therefore call the Old Testament, especially the prophetick Part of it, a more sure Word of Prophecy ; because it is a Kind of first Principle with us Christians, that no Part of that Scripture-Prophecy was the mere Dictate of an human Invention : For that sacred Oracle was not given out by uninspired Men ; but the sacred Authors of it uttered from the Impulse of the Holy Ghost upon them.

Some learned and very ingenious Divines of our own Church are of Opinion, that the Words of my Text relate not to the Old Testament, or to any Prophecies there, or however not principally ; but to the Prediction of our Lord, about the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, then near at Hand. But I think this Conjecture does not well suit with the Expressions of St. *Peter*, either in the Text, or the Verses following it. For the Description of this more sure Word of Prophecy exactly coincides with those Images, under which the Times of the Old Testament use to be delineated in the other Writings of the New. The Ages before the Coming of Christ are compared to Night and Darknes, and the Shadow of Death : And the *Advent* of Christ is spoken of as the Season of Day, succeeding the Night of Error and Ignorance, which before had prevailed. And just so the sure Word of Prophecy is described in the Text, as the faint Light, which was a Guide in the dark Place, till the Day dawned, and the Day-Star arose in their Hearts. But in what Sense could the plain Predictions in the New Testament, concerning the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, be compared to a Light, that supplies the Absence

of Day ; or the Sunshine of the Gospel, under which those Prophecies were delivered, be resembled unto a dark Place ? Besides, from the two Verses immediately following the Text, it appears, that *St. Peter* there spake of Prophecies that came of old Time ; which very ill agrees with those delivered in the same Age in which *St. Peter* wrote this Epistle. Further still, the Word of Prophecy, as is plain from the Apostle's Reasoning after the Text, was προφητεία γραφής, a Prophecy of Scripture, or a written Prophecy ; which Description will by no Means tally with our Lord's Predictions, or with those of his inspired Followers, concerning the Ruin of the Holy City. For supposing those Predictions, by this time, had been committed to Writing, and generally dispersed ; yet it is well known, that the Name of Scripture in the New Testament is ordinarily appropriated to the Books of the *Jewish* Canon, and is very seldom, if ever, given to any written Records of Christianity. Upon the whole therefore it is plain, that the more sure Word of Prophecy, for giving heed to which, under a certain Consideration, *St. Peter* commends the Christians, to whom he addressed his second Epistle, was
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either the Old Testament at large, or at least the prophetick Part of it. But, indeed, to speak my own Thoughts freely on the Subject, I have long been of Opinion, that the Apostle here meant the entire Old Testament, or the *Jewish* Canon of Scripture at large, and not any particular Division of those holy Books*. And I am glad to find myself not alone in these Sentiments, but concurring with a very learned Foreigner, the well known Father *Simon*. It has always seemed to me that *St. Peter's* Design in this Chapter was, to instruct the Christian Converts in the true Rule of Faith, that so they might not be seduced by those false Teachers, whom he foretells and describes in the Beginning of the second Chapter, as Men that would privately bring in damnable Heresies. Knowing therefore, as he himself says, that he was shortly to put off this his Tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ had shewed him, he endeavoured that they might be able after his Decease to have these things always in Remembrance. First therefore, he recommends to them, what he and the other

* Justin Mart. Dial. with Trypho Ed. Thirlb. p. 413. citing from the Historical Part of *Genesis*, calls that Part of Ser. ὁ λόγος ὁ προφητικὸς.

Apostles had made known unto them concerning the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, the Gospel they had preached unto them, or the History of the Life and Doctrines of our Saviour. He assures them, that these were not what future Deceivers might suggest, cunningly devised Fables, not a Romantick Narrative of strange and uncommon Adventures; but that the most wonderful of them, the Transfiguration of our Lord upon the Holy Mount, was a Fact, of which he and other of the Apostles were Eye-witnesses. They saw the excellent Glory, the known Symbol of Divinity, and heard a Voice coming to him from thence, and saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* A divine Teacher thus publicly and illustriously recognized by God himself, was above all reasonable Suspicion of Fraud and Imposture; and therefore, what the Apostles delivered from and concerning him was to be principally attended by all who would make their Calling and Election sure; who would have an Entrance ministred unto them abundantly into the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But besides this Gospel they had also another Rule or Light, the Old Testament, called by him, from

from a principal Branch of it, the Word of Prophecy ; which was not a Writing of uncertain Authority, or of human Composition, but really delivered by the Persons, whose Names stand at the Head of the several Books, whereof it consists. And these did not commit to writing their own human Conceptions, but were the Amanuenses of the blessed Spirit, writing as they were moved by him ; or, however, entirely under his infallible Direction : But lest this high Encomium upon the *Jewish* Scriptures, in an Epistle addressed to *Jews*, should lead them into a Mistake, as if the Old Testament was alone a sufficient Rule of Faith to Christians, he plainly tells them in what Light it was proper they should consider the Word of Prophecy, concerning which he had spoken such magnificent Things. Whilst they were in a dark Place, or, as *St. Paul* expresses himself, whilst they were Darknes, and before they were Light in the Lord, it was a sufficient Guide to them : But when a better Covenant was afforded them, when the Day dawned, and the Day-star, as *Christ* is termed in the Book of Revelations, arose in their Heart ; he was thenceforward to be considered as the

true,

true, *i. e.* the principal Light, which lighteth every one that cometh into the World.

Thus you have what I apprehend to be the real Meaning of the Apostle in the Words of the Text. He was greatly solicitous, before his Departure out of the World, to leave the dispersed Converts of the Circumcision rightly informed about the true Rule of their Faith and Practice. He foresaw, that false Teachers would arise amongst them, privately bringing in damnable Heresies ; and that, in order to corrupt the Faith, they would either misrepresent, or endeavour to disparage the sacred Rule of it : And so in Fact it happened. The judaizing Christians insisted on the perpetual Obligation of the Law of *Moses*, making the ritual Duties thereof necessary to Salvation under Christ, as they were before his Coming. To guard the Faithful among the Dispersion against these Deceivers, *St. Peter* cautions them to look upon the Old Testament-Scriptures as a provisional Guide only, fit for the Times in which it was given, as a Candle is during the Season of Night ; but not to be walked by when the stronger and better Light of Day approached. *St. Paul* had often admonished them to the same Effect, but
not

not with all the desired Success : Because the Zealots for the Law had prejudiced many of the *Jewish* Converts against him, as if his being the Apostle of the *Gentiles* had made him disaffected to the Law of *Moses*. But when the same Truths were recommended to them by St. *Peter*, to whom the Circumcision did belong as his particular Province, there was the greater Likelyhood of their being accepted and assented to. Others arose in the contrary extreme, who depreiated the Law and the Prophets, denying, that the *Mosaick* Creation and Dispensation was the Work and Appointment of God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but of some inferior Creator that was altogether unknown to him. And against the Poison of these, and such like Suggestions, the Apostle provides, by the honourable Character he gives of the Word of Prophecy ; by commending their Attention to it in a reasonable Way ; and by assuring them, that the ancient Prophecies were no other than the real Dictates of the Holy Ghost to inspired Men. Lastly, there started up likewise another Species of early Hereticks from the *Jewish* School, which rejected the written and inspired Records of the New Testament, in Defence of their own

Novelties ; alledging impiously, as well as irrationally, that the Apostles began to preach and to write before they were sufficiently informed of the History and Doctrines of their Master ; and that they themselves had, from their Founder, unwritten Traditions about those things, preferable to those which the Church received. And against these St. *Peter* seems prophetically to have pointed that Declaration of his, in the 16th ver. of the Chap. of the Text. *We (the Apostles of our Lord) have not followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; but were Eye-witnesses of his Majesty.*

Upon the whole, I trust it now appears, that St. *Peter*, in the Text, intended, no Comparison between the two Evidences to revealed Religion, to wit, Miracle and Prophecy ; much less to give the Preference to the latter before the former. Good and valid Proofs, both of them doubtless are ; and, in general speaking, they are both also reducible to one Class, that of Miracle : But when they are spoken of distinctly, as they sometimes are in Scripture, we are so far from finding Prophecy preferred to Miracle, that

it is not once exprefly and avowedly equalled to it.

One Exception to this is offered, by fuch as make it their Bufinefs to depretiate Miracles, which I fhall briefly confider, and then conclude. The Exception, then, is founded on the Answer made by *Abraham* in the Parable to the rich Man, who requested that he would fend *Lazarus* to his furviving Brethren from the Dead, in hopes, that, if one went unto them from the Dead, they might be induced to repent, and not come into the Place of Torment, where no Relief was to be found. *Abraham's* final Answer to this Request is, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be perfuaded, tho' one rife from the Dead.* But here it is to be obferved, *First*, That it does not appear to have been an absolute Difbelief of *Moses* and the Prophets, but a Neglect of the moral Duties required by them, which occafioned the rich Man to mifcarry: And this feemed to be greatly confirmed, by the End he propofed by fending *Lazarus* to his Brethren from the Dead, which is not faid to be in order to their Conviction, and to cure them of Infidelity, but that they might repent. To

which agrees the Expression in *Abraham's* Answer. He does not say, that if they heard not *Moses* and the Prophets, neither would they believe, tho' one rose from the Dead : But neither would they be persuaded, or as it might be better rendered, neither would they obey. It does not therefore follow hence, that our Lord equals Prophecy with Miracles, as an Evidence to the Truth of revealed Religion : But only, that whoever lives not up to an acknowledged Revelation, would not be induced to do it, though urged by the most startling Persuasions of one sent to him for that Purpose from the Dead.

Secondly, Supposing that *Abraham's* Answer related wholly to the Belief of the divine Authority of *Moses* and the Prophets; it should be considered, that this also rested, in a great Measure, upon the Evidence of Miracles. The Comparison therefore, made by *Abraham*, does not lie between Prophecy and Miracles ; nor does he assert, that, where the former availed not, the latter would be ineffectual : But only, that when a standing Revelation had been sufficiently attested by Miracles, whoever should reject it, would do the same, tho' new ones, of the most astonishing

S E R M O N V. 85

nishing Kind, should be wrought for his own particular Conviction.

The Sum then of all that has been said is, that our Lord and his inspired Followers do not, as some Enemies to our holy Religion would persuade us, prefer Prophecy to Miracle, as the stronger Evidence of the two, in the Behalf of Christianity. Nor is there one Instance in the whole New Testament, in which they are avowedly declared to be of equal Strength in that Respect. Both therefore are originally the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion, neither of them being solely or singly such to the Prejudice of the other.

S E R M O N VI.

J O H N v. 39.

Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me.

HAVING in former Lectures stated, explained, and defended the Argument for the Truth of the Christian Religion from Miracles, I am now to do the same by the other capital Proof of the same Point from Prophecy.

The Knowledge of future Events is the great Prerogative of God : And we have great Reason to believe, that no inferior Being does, in any Degree, partake of that Excellence. The fallen Angels, by their superior Knowledge and Experience, may guess more happily about Events to come, than the wisest of Men ; but to know and punctually to foretell such Contingences, is the alone Property of him, who is infinite in
Wisdom

Wisdom, and to whom all things, in every Period of Time, lie open at one View. Besides, if wicked and seducing Spirits had, and could convey, the Gift of Prophecy, we are very secure, that Almighty God would restrain them from exercising that Power to the Deception of Mankind in Matters of Religion : Because otherwise he would leave himself without the Means of giving clear and sufficient Credentials to any Messages or Revelations, that he should have occasion to send to his Creatures upon Earth. If the same Tokens appeared in the Messengers of Satan, as shew themselves in those of God, how shall Men certainly judge between diabolical and divine Teachers ? Prophecy, therefore, being the Signet of God, we may rely upon it, that he will not permit either wicked Angels, or wicked Men to counterfeit it.

On these Grounds then we may enlarge the Assertion of *St. Peter*, 2d Epistle, Chap. i. ver. 21. and say, that *Prophecy came not in old Time, either by the Will of Man, or of the Devil, but that holy Men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

Now the Books of the New Testament, and particularly the Text affirms, that the

28 S E R M O N VI.

Scriptures, many Ages before Christ was born, did prophetically testify of him: So that if this be true, the fulfilling of that Testimony in the Person of Jesus, at the same time that it verifies the Characters of those who penned the Old Testament, as true Prophets, does also prove, that Jesus was really he that was to come, the Christ, the Teacher, and the Saviour of the World. Had indeed the Passages predicted of him been all of them common and ordinary, such as any Man, pretending to the Title of Messiah, might of himself easily make good, his Claim would have received but little Strength thereby: But the Events foretold, and made the Marks of Messiah, were many of them troublesome and afflicting, such as no Impostor could find his Account in; and many of them were miraculous, which no one could fulfill, unless aided by the mighty Hand of God.

Lastly, Others again were fulfilled by Events uncommon and unlikely, tho' not miraculous; some of which were owing to the Malice of our Lord's Enemies, who undesignedly helped forward the Completion of Prophecies in his Person, whilst they prosecuted him for presuming to be the Man to whom those Prophecies belonged.

Prophecies therefore, thus circumstanced, whenever they are fulfilled, infallibly mark out the Person by them intended, and leave no possible Room for Mistake.

Having thus shewn, that Prophecy is a sufficient Ground, on which to build the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation ; I am next to distinguish, what Prophecies those are, upon which the Proof of this Point doth necessarily and essentially rest.

Prophecies relating to Messiah in the Old Testament, and marking out Jesus for the Man, may in general be reduced to two Kinds.

First, Such as are applied to that Purpose by the inspired Writers of the New Testament.

Secondly, Such as have, without any particular Mention of them in that Way by Evangelists or Apostles, been insisted on by uninspired Apologists for Christianity.

The former of these, *i. e.* such as are applied to Jesus in the New Testament, as fulfilled in and by him, are necessary to be defended by the Advocates for the Gospel Cause. For if any Passage out of the Old Testament should be given up, as wrong applied

plied by the Writers of the New, the Consequence would be the Ruin of the latter, with respect to their inspired Characters, and they would be thereby reduced to the Level of fallible Writers, and their Compositions would no longer be deemed the certain Rule of Faith and Manners. Nay, which is still worse, if the Enemies of the Gospel should be able to prove, either that no such Person as a Messiah is foretold by the Prophets, or that the confessed Prophecies, relating to that Point, were not fulfilled by our Lord; he himself would thereby be convicted of Falshood or Mistake, who, in my Text expressly affirms, that the Scriptures testify of him, as the Author and Giver of eternal Life, *i. e.* as the Christ.

But with respect to the latter Species of Predictions, concerning the Messiah and their Application to Jesus our Lord; I mean those which have not been expressly used to that Purpose, but in the Writings and Arguments of uninspired Persons, the Case is very different: For should the Advocates for Infidelity be able to disprove every one of them, it would only follow, that so many Christians had been mistaken; not that Christianity itself was false, or destitute of the Argument
from

from Prophecy. The Assertion of our Lord, in my Text, would still rest on those Predictions in the Old Testament, which are cited and argued from by the Writers of the New. I do not speak thus, out of any Apprehension, that no Prophecies relating to Christ can be made good, except such as are urged by the Apostles and Evangelists. On the other Hand, I really and firmly believe, that besides these, there are other Predictions, for the Pertinency of which, to the Times and the Person of Jesus, there is the highest Degree of Probability; some of which have such strong and evident Respect to the Age wherein our Lord lived, that if they were not then compleated, they never were, nor could be. But tho' these may, on some Occasions, especially in our Disputes with *Jews*, to very good Purpose be insisted on; yet the Controversy, as it has of late been managed by Deists, seems to me to require, that we chiefly at least apply ourselves to the Defence of those prophetick Testimonies to Christianity, which are expressly produced in the Writings of the New Testament.

For it is very well known, that a late Writer, pretending to inquire into the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion, confined

finied himself to the Proofs of it, that were to be found in the original Records of it. In this Inquiry he used much Art, and more Collusion, to shew, that, according to the New Testament itself, the Truth of Jesus's Claim to the Messiahship rested wholly on the Evidence from the Old, that such a Person as Christ was to come, and supposing or granting this, that Jesus was therein marked out to be the Man ; that the Proof of both these Articles is indeed laboured in the New Testament, not in a strict or logical Method of Reasoning, but in a Way that is merely allegorical and spiritual, and consequently inconclusive and unconvincing ; that these weak Reasonings were not used with *Jews* only, but also applied to unbelieving *Gentiles*. Thus having assigned insufficient Grounds of Christianity, he defies the Aid of the other Proof from Miracles, which, however good and convincing in itself, could not give Validity to the other Evidence from Prophecy, if it was radically insufficient.

Since then the Opposition to Christianity has of late turned chiefly on the insufficient Reasonings in the New Testament on its Behalf from Prophecy, our Province plainly is to defend the Scripture Arguments, for
 Jesus's

Jesus's Claim to the Messiahship, from the Predictions of the Old Testament, against the Objections of Infidel Opposers.

But here let it be once for all noted, that unless these Men make out a Charge of plain Incongruity and Absurdity, upon the Quotations of the Old Testament, as they are cited and applied in the New, they effect nothing at all. To inject Doubts, and merely to raise Difficulties on this Subject, will, by no means, serve their Turn. For the utmost Amount of this will only be, that the Reasonings in the New Testament for Christianity from the Old, are of doubtful Validity; whereas their Argument requires them to be absolutely false and invalid. Nothing short of this will exclude the Force of Miracles; which, tho' they can never render a Foundation valid, that is in itself invalid; nor make a false Inference true; nor make a Prophecy fulfilled, which is not fulfilled; nor mark out a Messiah, or Jesus for the Messiah, if both are not marked out in the Old Testament; yet Miracles may incline a reasonable Man to think himself in the wrong to condemn a Foundation attested to by them, which he only suspects to be invalid; they may induce a modest Man, rather to question his own Judgment,

ment, than the Truth of an Inference, that is drawn by one that works Miracles, as well as reasons for the Point he is to prove; especially when it happens, that as the Truth, so neither is the Falsehood of that Inference apparent to him. Again, when it is only a doubtful Case, whether a Prophecy is fulfilled, or no; Miracles wrought on the Affirmative Side of the Question, must surely have Weight enough with every unprejudiced Man to turn the Scale that Way. Lastly, when the Unbeliever only says, that he cannot see a Messias unquestionably spoken of in the Old Testament, nor Jesus there marked out for the Person; and Jesus himself not only affirms, that the Scriptures testify of him in that Capacity, but works the most astonishing Miracles under that very Character: Let the Enemies to Religion themselves judge, whether, in such a Case, every sober Man ought not rather to question his own Sagacity, and to believe *that* as a preternatural Truth, tho' he cannot make it out on the Principles of Science or Criticism.

I have formerly taken Notice, that the Writer now in View, not only denies the Availableness of Miracles to serve Christianity, if its Evidence from Prophecy be invalid; but

but in that Case also rejects those wonderful Facts as incredible, or at least highly doubtful. His Words are these. “ Miracles may
 “ be often justly deemed false Reports, when
 “ attributed to Persons who claim an Autho-
 “ rity from the Old Testament, which they
 “ impertinently alledge to support their Pre-
 “ tensions. God can never be supposed of-
 “ ten to permit Miracles to be done in Con-
 “ firmation of a false or pretended Mission”.
 Now Jesus is most certainly reported often to
 have done Miracles in Confirmation of his
 Mission. And this Writer has Reason on his
 Side when he affirms, that God can never
 be supposed often to permit Miracles to be
 done in Confirmation of a false or pretended
 Mission. If therefore he has supported his
 Pretensions to be the Messias and Saviour of
 the World, from impertinent Allegations out
 of the Old Testament, it would induce one
 to suspect at least, that the Miracles imputed
 to him by the Evangelists were false Re-
 ports. But then the Impertinence or False-
 hoods of those Allegations had need be very
 apparent: For it may so happen, that thro’
 the Distance of Time and Alteration of Cu-
 stoms, or thro’ our partial Acquaintance with
 the Language in which the Old Testament

was written, or thro' the observable Obscurity of prophetick Language, it may not be so easy for any Man in our Days to pronounce, that our Saviour, or the Writers of the New Testament have, in any Instance, impertinently applied Allegations from the Prophets to the Things of the Gospel. There is no one that has been conversant with the Writings of profane Antiquity, but who has observed, in Subjects of the plainest Nature, some passages not only unintelligible, but seemingly impertinent, which no Aid of good Sense, or modern Criticism, can explain or account for. And no Wonder: For Men write generally and chiefly for the Use of their own, or, however, of the immediately succeeding Times, and therefore satisfy themselves with being intelligible to those who live within that Period. They cannot, without the Gift of Prophecy, foresee every Alteration of Language, the Disuse of proverbial Expressions, the Oblivion of Facts well known when they wrote; and therefore sometimes briefly hint at, or allude to them, which sets Posterity quite at a Gaze, and brings them under great Perplexity. Now, in such a Case as this, no sober Reader pronounces an old Writer, otherwise of good Character, impertinent,

pertinent; but resolves the Difficulty into some of the abovementioned Causes. With how much greater Reason ought the same Indulgence to be extended to the prophetick Writings of the Old Testament, penned in a Language that has been a dead one above 2000 Years; a Language that was spoken only by one People, differing in Manners and Customs from all the World about them, and of which there are no extant Monuments, save the *Jewish* Scriptures. Prophecies, in themselves, are still supposed to carry some Degree of Obscurity, and when expressed in a Language of so peculiar a Character, they may well appear to us of difficult Interpretation; nor ought we to think, that the Inferences made from them by Christ and his Apostles, seventeen Hundred Years ago, must appear as strong and as clear now, as they did to the *Jews* then.

The utmost that, in this Case, we can justly expect to see, is a fair Semblance, a probable Correspondence between the ancient Predictions, and the Events adapted to them in the New Testament. And if this will not satisfy our unbelieving Adversaries; if they will allow no Prophecy to have been fulfilled, which may be liable to Cavil and unreasonable

ble Objection, the Fault will be entirely their own; and such Behaviour is really a Confession of Victory, tho' they are not ingenuous enough to drop the Opposition. The Writers on their Side are so pressed on this Subject, that they have been compelled to deny the Disadvantages we labour under, in forming an exact Judgment of these Things. They are hardy enough to assert, that good Sense, which is the same in all Times, enables us to determine in the present Case, as well as if we had lived in, or near the Ages of Prophecy : An Affirmation so contrary to the Nature of Things, and so opposite to the Opinion of the Wise and the Learned in all like Cases, that nothing but the utter Destitution of sober and pertinent Reasoning could have extorted it from them. And I doubt not, but that in the Sequel of this Argument, when we come to consider the particular Prophecies of the old Testament applied to Christ in the New, it will be evident, how much the Standard of Judgment set up by our Adversaries, *viz.* their own good Sense, has failed them; that they have not, so much as in one Instance, proved on our Lord, or his Apostles, an impertinent Allegation out of the Prophets: And that, notwithstanding all

the

the Dust they have raised, and all the fraudulent Arts they have practised, it will yet appear, to every candid and impartial Considerer, highly probable, that Jesus Christ was, in the Old Testament, marked out for the Messiah, in whom all the Families of the Earth should be blessed. In stating the Argument for the Truth of the Christian Religion from Prophecy, I would further observe, that as much clearer as it was, and more perceptible, to the *Jews* of our Saviour's Days than it is to us; yet our Lord and his immediate Followers do not seem to have laid so much Stress upon it, as they do on that from Miracles, nor so directly to have appealed to the former, as they do to the latter. With respect to Miracles, Christ was pleased to say, *If I do not the Works of my Father believe me not*: But he never thought fit to lay so strong an Appeal to Prophecy, as to say, *If the Scriptures do not testify of me, believe me not*. Of Miracles also, St. John, Chap. xx. ver. 31. says, *These were written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ*: But neither he, nor any other of the sacred Writers, remark thus upon Prophecies fulfilled. And tho' he had both these to witness to him, there was good Rea-

son, why he should lay the more apparent Strefs on one of them, than on the other. Miracle was an Argument that carried its own Strength with it, and needed no urging; the Illiterate were as sensible of its Force, as the Learned: Whereas the clearing-up and adapting of Prophecy, required Patience and Attention in the Hearers, to a Course of Reasonings and Deductions, to which ignorant People are with Difficulty persuaded. Besides, the Propriety and right Application of Prophecies was a Subject, which the Scribes and Pharisees would always dispute; and, in that Case, the Ignorance of the common People, added to the Prejudices in favour of those celebrated Doctors, might have hindered them from seeing on which Side of the Controversy the Truth lay. But neither their own Incapacity, nor the Authority of their Guides, could obstruct the Efficacy of what they saw and felt. Tho' they were told, that none of the Pharisees believed on Jesus, yet their own plain Sense taught them, that when Christ should come, he would do no more Miracles than our Lord did. And tho' they slanderously affirmed, that he was a Sinner; the Man that was born blind, and whom Jesus restored to Sight, could refute them

them from what all Men knew, *viz.* that God heareth not Sinners.

That which looks most like a formal Appeal to the Scriptures, for the Truth and Divinity of Christ's Mission, is the Beginning of my Text, *Search the Scriptures* : For herein he sends them to the Old Testament, as it should seem for unquestionable Information concerning him. But then it is to be noted, that the Original Words, Ερευνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς, may signify either imperatively, as in our Bibles, search the Scriptures, or indicatively, ye do search the Scriptures; and many learned Men are inclined to think the Indicative Sense of the *Greek* Words the true one. Of this Opinion anciently, was St. Cyril; and among the Moderns, are *Beza*, *Piscator*, *Cameron*, and *Lightfoot*, to whose Suffrages, in the Synopsis of the Criticks, the learned Compiler Mr. *Pool* adds his own.

Their Reasons are; first, that the Indicative Sense of the Words, as they are directed to the Rulers among the *Jews*, suits better with their known Character, than the Imperative one would do. To bid them search the Scriptures, whose Study lay entirely in them, and whose chief Glory was the Knowledge of them, to a simple *Apex* or *Iota*, seems not

becoming the human Wisdom, and much less the divine Capacity of our Lord that spake them. Whereas, to say that they did search the Scripture, was a Concession just in itself, and proper to introduce that which follows.

2dly, The Context seems to require, that our Lord, in the Beginning of my Text, should be understood Indicatively, and not Imperatively. He adds, *for in them ye think ye have eternal Life*. And, questionless, a good Reason this was for their Practice, if that already was to search the Scriptures, *i. e.* if Christ spake to them indicatively; but it very ill agrees with the Supposal, that they neglected to search the Scriptures; and yet such a Supposal is necessary, if our Lord commanded them that Duty: Because it is not to be conceived, that our Lord would make that the Matter of a Command to Men, which they already practised to a remarkable Degree of Exactness.

3dly, The Verse following, compared with my Text, does, with still greater Sense, argue for the Indicative Sense of ἐρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς. For after telling the *Jews*, that the Scriptures testified of him, he adds the following Reprehension of their Obstinacy and Incredulity: *And ye will not come to me, that*
ye

ye might have Life. Now, taking the Word *ἐπειγᾶτε* indicatively, we see just Grounds for this Reprehension; for then the whole admits of this easy Sense. Ye search the Scriptures, and the Reason of your Diligence herein is, that from thence you expect to be set in the Way to eternal Life: Now those Scriptures testify of me, that the only Method of obtaining that Blessing, is to believe in me, and to practice what I teach: And yet ye will not come unto me, and be my Disciples. All this is rational and convincing. But which Way can these two Verses be made easy Sense of, if, in the Beginning, our Lord be supposed to speak imperatively: For if the *Jews* did not search the Scriptures, but needed an express Command for so doing, how could it be expected, that they should know those Writings testified of Jesus, and, on Supposition of Ignorance herein, what Wonder was it that they did not come unto him? At this Rate the whole of their Fault was their neglecting to read the Scriptures, for which our Lord spares them, who yet reprehends them for the necessary Consequences of that Neglect. But if such Conduct and such Ratiocination be unworthy of that divine Person that spake the contested Words,

we need no better Argument for preferring the Indicative Sense, of which they are equally susceptible in themselves.

It does at least, however, appear from hence, that neither our Lord, nor his Apostles, does, in any clear Instance, directly and expressly send even the *Jews* to get Conviction from the Old Testament, that he was the Messiah, as he does to Miracles: For if any where he does this, it is in the Words of my Text, which may, and, as it should seem, ought to have a different Construction.

In a Word, we find that both Christ and his Apostles claimed the Evidence of Prophecy to the Truth of the Christian Religion; and the heavenly Commission of its Founder. We find also, that in Fact, Arguments from Prophecy were effectual to convince *Jews* in both these Articles, in the Times of the Gospel. It is further likewise observable, that our Lord supposes that *Jews*, or at least the learned amongst them, might, from the Congruity of Predictions with the Actions and Circumstances of his own blessed Life, have been convinced that *Moses*, in the Law, and the Prophets, wrote of him. But if he had supported his Predictions from impertinent Allegations of this Kind, as the Infidels would persuade us that he did, it would be utterly
incre-

incredible, that so many of that Nation should have been converted by this very Argument. That those Allegations therefore were in themselves impertinent, is an absurd and impossible Supposition. But it is possible, that thro' the Loss of ancient Helps, the Pertinence of those Allegations, which once convinced and converted Thousands of *Jews* to Christianity, may not be so clear to us in these Times. And if this be all that Unbelievers contend for, we should soon be agreed upon that Head. But if from the present Obscurity of this Topick they shall infer, that it never was clear or convincing, and that therefore our Saviour, and his Apostles, proved Christianity by a weak and irrational Medium, we deny the Consequence, and defy them to make it good. I add once more, that I speak not this from any Diffidence of the present Validity of the Argument for Christianity from Prophecy, which I hope, in the Sequel of these Lectures, to shew to the Satisfaction of every candid and impartial Considerer; but only to convince our Adversaries, that the utmost they can promise themselves from their Attacks upon Prophecy, will fall short of proving it to be false or absolutely invalid. So that the Use and Availableness of Miracles being still unquestionable, their Obstinacy and Infidelity will be utterly inexcusable. SER.

S E R M O N VII.

J O H N X. 24.

Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

THE great and fundamental Principle of that Writer, who has distinguish his Attempts against Christianity, by reducing the Evidence for it to the single Point of Prophecy, and afterwards trying to invalidate that Proof also; I say, the fundamental Principle with him is, that Jesus claimed the Obedience and Submission of Mankind to him and his Doctrines, as he was the Messiah promised and predicted in the Old Testament: Or, as at other Times he expresses himself, that Jesus claimed to be the Messias of the *Jews*, foretold by the Prophets.

Now, in my last Discourse on this Subject, I endeavoured to shew, that, admitting the Truth of this first Principle, it was not necessary

S E R M O N VII. 107

cessary that this Claim should be made out by an immediate and direct Appeal to the Prophets themselves ; inasmuch as the Proof from Miracles would plainly and irrefragably lead us to the very same Conclusion, and by a Way that was both shorter and less perplexed.

But further, to shew the utter Falshood of this Infidel-Scheme, and that it is at once defective in both, in Premises and Consequence ; I shall at this Time examine the Principle on which it is built, and inquire, whether Jesus claimed the Obedience of Mankind, as the Messias of the Old Testament ; or whether he claimed to be the Messias of the *Jews*, foretold by the Prophets.

And here, that he claimed the Submission of the *Jews* to him and his Doctrines, we grant ; that he intended the *Jews* should receive him as their Messias, and to some of them owned that Character, we grant also ; but we deny that he ever *openly* claimed to be the Messias, which is the only Sense of claiming, that will at all serve his Purpose. For if he means no more, than what we allow to be true, that Jesus secretly claimed to be the Christ, it will not come up to the Point : For the Claim, he speaks of, he makes
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108 S E R M O N VII.

to be such a one, by Virtue of which Jesus claimed Submission to his Person and Doctrines ; which therefore could not be a secret Claim, but one that was open and specifick. Besides, the Claim, which our Author supposes Jesus to have made, was one that was to undergo Examination, and consequently could be no latent or indeterminate one. By claiming, therefore, he must mean setting up a Title plainly, avowedly, and universally.

But that ever Jesus claimed the Messiahship of the *Jews*, in this Manner, we read not ; nay, which is more, we read what makes it impossible, that this should have been the Case ; and of this the Text itself is a Proof : For if Jesus had ever openly declared, that he was the Messias of the *Jews*, was it conceivable that the *Jews* would say unto him, as they there do, *How long dost thou make us to doubt ? If thou be the Christ tell us plainly.* For Jesus had long before this claimed the Obedience of Mankind, and particular of those very *Jews*, who asked the Questions in the Text. If therefore he had claimed their Submission to his Person and Doctrines, as the Christ, they could not have doubted about the Matter ; and would not have needed the plain Declaration, there demanded

demanded by them, whether he was the Christ, or not. It is further remarkable, that Jesus, in his Answers to the Query in the Text, does by no Means relieve the *Jews* under their Suspence, and is far from telling them plainly, that he was the Christ: Appealing only to his former Sayings of himself, and to his Works, which bare Witness of him; but the Particulars of what they testified he does not expressly tell them. They had before asked him (*John viii. ver. 25.*) Who he was: And to this he made no other Reply, but *that* he was *the same* he said *unto* them *from the Beginning*. So far therefore was he from claiming, or openly demanding to be received by the *Jews* for their Messiah, that, after several Interrogatories about such a Claim, they could not prevail on Jesus expressly to declare, that he had any such Pretensions.

But tho' our Lord might have Reasons against making the Claim himself, if the Claim was to be made in his Life-time, he might have commanded, or at least permitted others then to have done it in his Behalf: And yet it is plain he did neither the one, nor the other. For when *Simon Peter* at a Meeting, wherein only Jesus and his Disci-
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110 S E R M O N VII.

ples were present, had confessed that *Jesus was Christ, the Son of the living God*, he charged the Disciples to tell no Man that he was *Jesus the Christ*. Matth. xvi. ver. 20. It is also remarkable, that our Lord, on this Occasion, pronounced *Simon Bar-jona* blessed; because the Matter of his Confession had not been suggested to him by Flesh and Blood, but by his heavenly Father: But this could not have been truly said, if Jesus had openly claimed to be what *Peter* there confessed of him: For *Peter*, on that Supposition, must have had it from his Lord's Mouth, who was Flesh and Blood. And thus it appears, that our Lord, far from making his Claim to the Messiahship in Person, did it not so much as by Proxy, nor would he suffer any one, over whom he had Power, to do it officiously. And hence it came to pass, that when the Devils would have declared this Character of Jesus, in one Instance, at least, he would not permit it, as appears from *Mark i. ver. 34.* where the Evangelist Remarks, *that the Devils cast out by Jesus were not suffered to say that they knew him*: For that is the Marginal rendering in our *English* Bibles, and by much the best, the truest, and properest. True indeed

S E R M O N VII. III.

indeed it is, that Jesus was not thus reserved among his own Disciples, nor even among Strangers, *i. e.* *Samaritans*. For unto the Woman of *Samaria*, only on the Occasional mention of *Messias* or *Christ*, and without being asked the Question, he declared that he was the Person. But then he demanded no Subjection or Obedience to his Doctrines in this Case; the *Samaritans* being without the Bounds of his Commission. And even here, before he let her know that he was the *Christ*, he manifested to her a more general Character, *viz.* that he was a Prophet, which the Woman collected from our Lord's telling her, at first Sight, several Particulars of her Life. Nay even when *John* sent two of his Disciples to Jesus, to know from his own Mouth, whether he was the *Christ*, or not; he chose not to make them a direct Reply, but left them to gather his Meaning by what they saw and heard, and the Conformity thereof with a Prophecy concerning *Christ*, which he fulfilled before their Eyes. In a Word, if none of the Particulars above-mentioned had come to our Knowledge, we might assuredly gather from what passed at our Lord's Arraignment, that he had never openly declared himself to be the *Messias*.

For

For had this been the Case, the Chief Priests and Elders, and Council, might have saved themselves the Trouble of finding false Witness against him for to put him to Death: Most of those, who heard him claim the Messiahship, would have been ready to depose so capital an Article against him. For that this was the Matter of Accusation, so maliciously sought after by our Lord's Enemies, was plain from hence; that when no consistent Evidence of this Sort could be procured by any Means, fair or foul, the High Priest was compelled to a most disingenuous Method of extorting it from Jesus himself by an Oath: *I adjure thee by the living God*, said he, *that thou tell me whether thou be the Christ the Son of God*. After all this, therefore, what are we to think of this Enemy to Christianity, who has the Hardiness to assert, that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah of the *Jews*; and this not, by the by, only, and in the Heat of Controversy, but to set out with so grievous a Falshood, and to make it the very Foundation of his Scheme. That he claimed Obedience and Submission to his Doctrines, as a Teacher sent from God, we grant; and as one that was more than an ordinary Prophet, even the only begotten of
God :

God : And from hence his Hearers were left to collect that he was also their Messiah, as they who believed this high Character of his, must necessarily do : But that he really was the Christ, he never directly asserted to his unbelieving Countrymen, till he was constrained to do so by the sacred Obligation of an Oath, at his Arraignment before the High Priest. All that he had let fall before on the Subject to unconverted *Jews*, were Hints only, and Innuendos ; industriously avoiding all open Maintenance of his Claim to the Messiahship, when he innocently could do it ; and evading to explain upon that Point, whenever he could do it, without a Crime, tho' his Enemies were oft importunate with him for explicit Answers. Altho' therefore Jesus had really a Claim to the Messiahship ; yet he never openly entered it, as he did his other Pretensions, as a Person divinely commissioned to publish a new Religion to the World ; and the Son of God by Nature, one with the Father, one who had all things in common with the Father, and had Glory with him before the World began ; one of whom *Moses* wrote, and to whom the Scriptures testified. Why Jesus chose, after this Manner, to insinuate his Claim, rather

114 S E R M O N VII.

than in exprefs Words to urge it, is not difficult to fay. Had he done this at the Beginning of his Ministry, his Death would have been greatly hastened thereby ; and, without a perpetual Miracle, he could not poffibly have lived long enough to compleat his Commiffion, for vifiting all the dark Corners of *Ifrael*, and difpenfing Light, and Truth, and Health in the feveral Cities of *Judea* and *Galilee*. For from the firft Moment of his declaring himfelf to be the Mef-
 fias and Saviour of the World, the unbeliev-
 ing *Jews* would have apprehended him, as
 they afterwards did ; and would never have
 defifted importuning the *Roman* Governor to
 put him to Death, as one, who by fetting up
 to be Chrift a King, was a Rebel, and an
 Enemy to *Cæfar*. But there was not the like
 Danger in avowing himfelf to have a heaven-
 ly Commiffion, and a divine Nature : For
 thefe were Matters not likely to excite the
 Jealoufy of the *Roman* Government, tho' they
 raifed the Indignation of the *Jews*. And
 the utmoft that Jefus had to fear from the
 latter, was the Effect of popular Rage and
 Tumult, which he knew how to avoid, and
 in fact had more than once avoided.

That

That Jesus, whilst he preached and recommended his Doctrines to the World, never laid an open and express Claim to the Messiahship, is in a Manner confessed by him, who has asserted the contrary, in that he has not produced one clear Testimony for such a Claim. And in order to supply, or at least to cover this Defect, he has artfully joined another of our Lord's confessed Claims to that of Messiah, as if they both were one and the same; saying, that Jesus claims to be the Son of God, or Messiah of the *Jews*, foretold by the Prophets. He knew it to be undeniable, that our Lord openly and frequently maintained that he was the Son of God. If therefore he could pass it upon his Readers, that the Son of God was only another Name for the Messiah, the Proofs of the former would be considered as so many Testimonies to the latter; and every time Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, he might be said to have claimed to be the Messiah of the *Jews*: But that these are equivalent Propositions; tho' it has been affirmed by a great Christian Writer, for the Service of a particular Hypothesis, is what we utterly deny. The same Person may be the Son of God, and the Messiah of the *Jews*; and in

fact we believe, that to Jesus belonged each of these Characters : But that still they are distinct, is plain from Scripture. For that affirms the Second Person of the ever blessed Trinity to have been the Son of God from everlasting ; whereas his Investiture into the Office of Messias was subsequent to his Incarnation. As the Son of God, and one in Substance with the Father and the Holy Ghost, he will also remain to all Eternity : Whereas the Kingdom, as well as the Priestly and Prophetick Dignity of the Messias, will cease after the Judgment of the great Day ; the Son himself, in these Respects, becoming subject unto him, from whom he received the Office of Mediator. And hence it further appears, that the Son of God and Messias are Titles of a very different Import : The one denoting the Nature of its Subject, and the other only his Office. The Son of God he was by necessary Condition, the Messias by Appointment. Agreeably to all which the *Jews* of our Lord's Days understood these Titles to be altogether distinct : For though they had heard Jesus openly, and without the least Reserve, and frequently call God his Father ; they appear still to have been under an Uncertainty, whether he claimed to be the

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Christ

Christ or no ; which could not have happened, if they had apprehended the Son of God and the Messias to be attributes of the same Meaning. That they had distinct Notions of these things is likewise manifest from the different Manner in which they were affected, upon hearing the one or the other Title imputed to Jesus. When others said of him, that he was the Messias, they coolly and calmly argued the Case, objecting what they thought made against his Title thereto : As his Birth at *Nazareth* (which they supposed to have been the Place of his Nativity) and not at *Bethlehem* ; the Notoriety of his Parentage, whereas when Christ cometh they believed no one should know whence he was, and the like : But when he made himself to be, in a proper or a peculiar Sense, the Son of God, they had no Patience with him, but took up Stones to stone him to Death for Blasphemy ; and because he being a Man, by assuming that Title, made himself God. Again, at the Arraignment of our Lord, the *Jews* made our Lord to be a Capital Offender on a distinct Account : *First*, For pretending to be the Son of God, and afterwards for making himself Christ, a King. The former of these they declared to be punish-

able with Death, by a Law of their own, meaning that against Blasphemy; the latter as a Crime against *Cæsar*. But would the principal *Jews* have trifled, by distinguishing where no Difference lay, and splitting into two Cases, what really was but one and the same? *Lastly*, If to be the Son of God and the Christ, were equivalent Epithets, how came the Enemies of our Lord to be at so great a Loss for Evidence of his Claim to the Messiahship, as we find them to have been? How happened it, at this Rate, that they never urged Jesus's assuming the Title of the Son of God, which they could abundantly prove, if that was only another Expression for his being the Christ? True it is they said, We have a Law, and by our Law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. But for this very Reason ought we to conclude, that, in the Opinion of the *Jews*, more was meant by being the Son of God, than being the Christ? For if those had been convertible Terms, then for any Man to declare himself to be the Messiah, must have been Blasphemy by the *Jewish* Law, and punishable with Death. But this is utterly incredible: Because it would thence follow, that whenever Christ should appear,

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and declare his Character, he would be chargeable on that Account with the horrid Sin of Blasphemy, and justly deserve Death. And how inconsistent all this must be with the general and eager Wishes of the *Jews* for the *Advent* of their Messiah, and with their Expectations of the temporal Grandeur and Happiness of his Administration, I need not say. From what has been said I hope it appears, that Jesus our Lord, by claiming openly and avowedly to be the Son of God, did not necessarily claim to be the Messiah of the *Jews* foretold by the Prophets: But that those two Titles were in themselves distinct, and were so apprehended to be by the *Jews* of our Saviour's Days; so that his Pretensions to the former of these Characters ought not to be construed as a Claim of the latter. He really was indeed both the one and the other: But the Stress of his Argument, whereby he endeavoured to persuade his Countrymen to believe, besides the internal Goodness of his Doctrines, and his own unspotted moral Character, was, that God was his Father, and that he sent him to teach the World in his Name. The first, therefore, and fundamental Principle of the Christian Religion was, that Jesus, the Foun-

der thereof, was a Teacher sent from God, and that he faithfully delivered the Will of God to Mankind. This being the most general Character of Jesus, must stand foremost, both according to the Nature of the Thing, and the Rules of Method: And, accordingly this was first, and chiefly insisted on by our Lord, in his Discourses concerning himself. The second and more special Character of Jesus was that, not of a common Messenger from God, but of one who was a Person of the highest natural Dignity, the only and eternally begotten Son of God: And thus much also our Lord early, openly, and freely declared concerning his own natural Condition. The third and last of Jesus's Characters, and what distinguished his Office from all other divine Missions was that of being the Messiah and Saviour of the World, whom *Moses* in the Law, and the Prophets did say should come: And this Jesus hinted to his Auditors, and sometimes proved in the consequential Way, but never once voluntarily, openly, and expressly assumed in conversing with *Jewish* Believers; tho' he made no Secret of it among his Disciples and to the *Samaritans*. Our Adversary had been set right in this Point by a learned and ingenious

Apologist

Apologist for Christianity among us: But instead of being convinced by what he was not able to refute, he affects to wonder at it as a Novelty, and determines to proceed still in his own Way, and to suppose, tho' against Sense and the plainest Fact, that the Messiahship of Jesus is the fundamental or first Article of the Christian Religion. But confident Assertions, in such a Case, will not alter the Nature or Order of Christian Fundamentals, so as to make that stand foremost, which really is last both in Reason and Fact. He therefore, who would make a rational and methodical Inquiry into the Merits of the Christian Cause, must begin with the most general and simple Principle thereof, *viz.* that Jesus was a true Messenger from God: And the direct Proof of this are the Credentials of many, wonderful, and uncontrolled Miracles. The next and second Subject of Examination must respect the natural Dignity of our Founder; and here an Argument must be demanded, which may convince us, that, in his superior Nature, he was one with God, and the eternally begotten of the Father: And this also our Lord's Miracles evince, being a stronger Testimony of his divine Perfections, than of his Prophetick Character.

For

For if it be against all Reason to suppose, that God would in general suffer a false Prophet to work such Miracles, in Proof of a pretended divine Commission; it must still be a more apparent Absurdity to conceit, that God would permit such Signs to accompany the Teaching of any Person, who not only counterfeits a Revelation, but also claims a wonderful and near Kindred with the Deity himself, arrogating divine Perfections, and a Partnership in the incommunicable Prerogatives of God. Sooner might we expect a miraculous Judgment from God, to strike such Presumption dead, than a constant supply of Signs and Wonders to corroborate so great Blasphemy and Impiety. Jesus therefore living and dying, and rising again with visible Marks of divine Approbation, must have been what he all along openly asserts himself to be, *viz.* the Messenger and the Son of God. These two leading Articles of Christianity being thus secured by Proof, that is every Way sufficient; all reasonable, or, however, all necessary End of Inquiry into the Merits of that Religion is thereby answered: And he that is not yet satisfied, but remains still diffident of Jesus's third Character as the Messiah, resolving not to believe in him

him, till that Point shall be made out in the direct Way, by an Appeal to the Prophecies of the Old Testament, must proceed on this Supposition; that God may lend his infinite Power to support false Claims in Religion; that he may give the highest and most astonishing Testimonies of his Approbation to an Impostor, who pretended to no less than an Equality with himself in all essential Perfections. Such a Dispute therefore, properly speaking, is not so much, whether Jesus was the Messias, as whether God be a just, a wise, and a good Being: For so long as any Doubt remains concerning the first of these Questions, the second must continue disputable. I have only to add, that what has been said is far from being intended to discourage you from comparing the Prophecies in the Old Testament, referred to by the Writers of the New, with the Events and Actions of the blessed Jesus. I doubt not but that whoever enters into such an Inquiry, without Prejudice, will see the Strength and Pertinence of every Prediction alledged. But if it should happen otherwise; if the Connection between some of the Gospel Incidents, and the Prophecies said to have been thereby fulfilled, should not be quite clear;

clear ; you plainly see that this being a Matter rather of Curiosity than Necessity, a Disappointment in the Inquiry ought not to stagger, and much less to overturn your Steadiness in the Christian Faith.

For many Reasons may be assigned, why the Evidence from Prophecy to Jesus's being the Christ, admitting the Fact to be ever so true, may not always appear unexceptionable : But the utter Falshood of that Fact cannot be accounted for, without horrid Blasphemy, and the grossest Absurdity. God himself must be a Party in propagating that Error, if it be one ; must have been aiding to his own Dishonour, and the Deception of his Creatures : And whosoever will chuse to admit such impious Suppositions, rather than confess his own Ignorance, or give up his own Misconceptions, is at once the most unreasonable and the most profane Creature in the World.

S E R M O N VIII.

GENESIS xxii. 18.

And in thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed : Because thou hast obeyed my Voice.

THESE Words were spoken by God to *Abraham*, and contain Part of the Reward, which was intended him for his Obedience to that trying Command, to sacrifice his Son *Isaac*. God in the Verse preceding had declared, *That, in Consideration of Abraham's Compliance with this seemingly harsh Injunction, in Blessing he would bless him, and in Multiplying he would multiply his Seed, as the Stars of Heaven, and as the Sand which is upon the Sea Shore; and his Seed shall possess the Gate of his Enemies.* Over and above all which, *Abraham* is further assured in my Text, *That in his Seed, all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed.* He had before been told the same Thing, tho' in Words less express. Thus when he was

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commanded to depart from his Kindred and Father's House, among other Motives and Encouragements to so hazardous an Undertaking, God assures him, *That in him shall all Families of the Earth be blessed*, Chap. xii. ver. 3. This Declaration of God's gracious Purpose to *Abraham*, was made also to the Angels, whom the good Patriarch had entertained, as we find from *Gen. xviii. 18*. But on both these Occasions, the Promise was couch'd in such Language, as, in its own obvious Sense, would lead one to imagine, that *Abraham*, in his own Person, was to prove the Fountain of Blessing to all the Families of the Earth. But this last and highest Trial of his Faith and Obedience, merited, it seems, a fuller Explanation of that which had before been promised, *viz.* that the Blessing of which all the Families or Nations of the Earth were to partake thro' his Means, was not to flow from him personally and immediately, but from his Seed or Descendants.

How the *Jews*, before the coming of Christ, understood these several Promises, we know not. Their *Chaldee* Paraphrast, who, in many other Places, explains the *Hebrew* Text as an Expositor, here barely and literally translates

flates it; *For thy Sons, or Childrens, Sakes, shall all the Families of the Earth be blessed.*

But the inspired Men of the New Testament apply this Promise, or Prophecy, to Christ Jesus, whom they affirm to be singly and personally that Seed of *Abraham*, in whom it was foretold, that all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed.

First, *St. Peter*, in the Conclusion of his Speech to the *Jews*, in the 3d Chap. of *Acts*, tells them, *That they are the Children of the Prophets, and of the Covenant which God made with their Fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy Seed shall all the Kindreds of the Earth be blessed.* He adds in the *ver.* following, *Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his Iniquities.* This was the same in Effect with telling them, that God, in the Person of his Son Jesus, had fulfilled the Promise made to *Abraham*; that Christ was that particular Seed or Descendant of his, in whom all the Kindreds of the Earth were to be blessed; that this beneficent Purpose was first executed on them, to whom Jesus the Son of God was primarily sent, to convey to them the greatest

of all Blessings, Pardon of their Sins, and a Riddance from all their Iniquities.

After him, *St. Paul* applies this Prophecy also to Christ and the Circumstances of the Gospel, *Gal. iii. 8.* *The Scripture*, says that Apostle, *foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen thro' Faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all Nations be blessed.* So then, adds he, *they which be of Faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.* The Apostle of the Gentiles, watchful for the Interest, and jealous of the Privileges of those under his Province, shews them, that they were literally included in the Covenant made by God with *Abraham*, as well as the *Jews*, seeing the Nations were not only to be blessed in him, but with him. In a Word, the Gospel Mystery was so fully contained in this Prophecy, if we are to credit *St. Paul*, that he tells us, *God therein preached before the Gospel unto Abraham.*

If therefore the Enemies of Christianity can fairly prove, that, notwithstanding what these two Apostles have said of this Passage, and its Relation to Messiah, it meant something quite different, and that they have forcibly and impertinently applied it to our Lord Jesus; they will then have Reason to say, as
they

they do, that the Gospel has no Support from the Old Testament, otherwise than as allegorically interpreted. What Turn the *Jews* give to this noble Prophecy, to defeat the Use that inspired Writers make of it, I know not; never remembring that they have made any Attempts upon it. And yet our immediate Concern in the Argument from Prophecy is with the *Jews*, to whom, and to converted Christians alone, the Writers of the New Testament reason from this Topick. The divine Authority of the Old Testament is all along supposed in this Question, which the *Jews* only, of all the Enemies to Christianity, are concerned to maintain: So that, if neither they, nor modern Infidels arguing on their Principles, can assign any other more probable a Completion of the Prophecy in my Text, than that which is insisted on by the Apostles abovementioned, they must be convinced thereby, or else give up their Scriptures, as containing Prophecies which never were compleated. If therefore our Lord, and his Apostles, proved Jesus to be the Christ, from such Prophecies, as either pertained to him, or else were quite impertinent, they argued to the *Jews* according to the known Rules of Logick, leaving them no other Al-

130 S E R M O N VIII.

ternative, save this, to renounce Judaism, or to embrace Christianity.

I have already intimated, that it does not appear, to me at least, what other Event the *Jews* would assign, as intended in the Prophecy of the Text, that in *Abraham*, or in his Seed, all the Families of the Earth should be blessed. To apply it to Messiah, *i. e.* to such a one as they themselves pretend to expect, would be altogether impracticable, or rather absurd : For they describe him in such Circumstances, and represent him in such a Light, as make him a Blessing to themselves only, and the Calamity, rather than the Happiness, of all other Nations. Their Messiah is to reduce all the Families in the Earth to his Obedience, and to the *Jewish* Customs, both Religious and Civil, not by mild or rational Methods, but by the terrible Arguments of Fire and Sword : He is to tear up all the ancient Establishments, the darling Customs, the venerable Institutions, that till then shall have prevailed throughout the *Gentile* World : And instead of a just and well regulated Liberty, which, to every good and generous Mind, is a Blessing above value, they must submit to a Yoke, which, according to the Confession of *Jews* themselves, neither they,
nor

nor their Forefathers were able to bear. Now, to call fuch an Exchange of Condition a Bleffing, or to fuppose that God, by way of Reward to *Abrāham*, would promise that one of his Descendents should, after this manner, blefs all the Families of the Earth, would be an Insult upon the common Sense of Mankind, as well as a most impious Abuse of holy Scriptures. But admitting this to be no Absurdity, nor even Impropropriety; allowing it to be a real Bleffing, to the remotest Nations, to be torn from their native and favourite Homes, see their natural Princes bound in Chains, and their Nobles with Links of Iron following and adorning the Triumphs of a Nation, which, till then, they have ever hated and despised; supposing it to be no Hardship, but rather a Felicity, that, with or without Conviction, the whole *Gentile* World must abandon their several religious Persuasions, and be compelled to undergo the painful Rite of Circumcision, and ever after to come under Subjection to the slavish Ordinances of touch not, taste not, handle not: Supposing, I say, all this; and sure a harder Supposition than this is, cannot well be conceived; yet this odd, this chimerical Kind of Bleffing, can befall none but fuch, as shall live in and after

132 S E R M O N VIII.

the Advent of the *Jewish* Messias; whereas, the Blessing foretold in the Text, seems to be of a Sort that was to extend to all Times, as well as to all People. If the Blessing meant in the Prophecy of the Text was to be thus extensive, it was a Reward besitting the Person to whom it was given. For *Abraham* is almost as remarkable for his Humanity, as for his Faith: And to be informed, that one of his Line should be the Source of Blessing to the entire human Species, was enough to gladden the Heart of that good and generous Patriarch: Whereas, if no more was meant thereby, than that, after a Tract of 3 or 4000 Years, one of his Posterity should make his Way thro' Bloodshed and Devastation to universal Empire, and should give no other Happiness to those whom his victorious Sword should spare, besides an Entail of Slavery upon them and their Posterity, both of Body and Mind; this, I say, would give but small Pleasure to a Person of *Abraham's* beneficent Disposition. A Zealot for the *Mosaick* Religion might be so far blinded by his Prejudices, as to think the Loss of all earthly Privileges, would be more than made up to the Nations of the Earth, by their becoming Profelytes to the Law. But the Promise of the Text

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S E R M O N VIII. 133

was made 430 Years before the giving of the Law, which therefore could not be considered in the Patriarch's Estimate of Blessedness. On these Accounts therefore, besides others, which the Time will not permit me to mention, and which may be passed over without Damage to my Argument; I say, on these Accounts, the *Jewish* Messiah, if ever he comes, cannot be he, in whom all the Families of the Earth will be blessed, and consequently cannot be the Seed of *Abraham*, foretold in the Text.

If, by that Expression, the *Jews* would rather understand the Posterity of *Abraham* at large, I presume the Turn they would give the Prophecy, would be to this, or the like Effect: That the Seed of *Abraham*, *i. e.* first the Patriarchs, and after them the 12 Tribes, would be a Blessing to all the Families of the Earth, by keeping up the great Fundamental of all Religion, the Doctrine of the one true God, in Opposition to Idolatry and Polytheism, or the Notion of many Gods under one supreme Deity. But this would be an unreasonable Application of the Prophecy: First, because this was no more than what *Abraham* himself might foresee would come to pass, according to the natural Course of Things,

and therefore was unlikely to be the subject of a Prophecy, much less of a preternatural Discovery made to the Patriarch in Reward of his Faith and Obedience to a most self-denying Duty.

Abraham, in his own Person, was separated from his Kindred, to preserve him from the Infection of an idolatrous Neighbourhood. And to confirm him the more in the essential Point of Belief, the Unity of the Godhead, it pleased God to give him the Covenant of Circumcision; and with a View to the same End, he made it obligatory to all his Posterity, every Male whereof was to be circumcised the eighth Day. Nor was it once only, but frequently, that God honoured him with the Manifestation of himself. Further, to distinguish him as the Favourite of Heaven in the Countries where he sojourned, he suffered, as the Psalmist expresses it, no Man to do him Wrong, but reprov'd even Kings for his Sake. In return for all these Favours and Mercies, *Abraham* was a zealous Servant of the true God in himself, and equally desirous was he, that his Posterity should, in this Respect, be like minded with him. God himself promised thus much for him, *Gen. xviii. 19. I know him*, says he, meaning
Abra-

Abraham, that he will command his Children, and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord to do Justice and Judgment. All these Things then being considered, could it be any Thing new or strange to *Abraham* to be told, that his Posterity should prove a Blessing to the World, by keeping up the Belief and Worship of the one true God, which he already knew to be a probable, if not a certain, Case? To tell him, by way of Prophecy, and as a high Favour, so obvious an Event, would have been to banter, rather than to reward the Patriarch. Decency therefore and Piety, as well as good Sense, forbid us in this Manner to understand the Prophecy, about which we are at present discoursing; and whether the *Jews* and we can or cannot agree precisely about the Subject of it, it is incumbent on both to maintain, that something surprising to *Abraham*, and utterly unforeseen by him, was intended therein.

A late Writer indeed, who has been all along, throughout these Lectures, constantly in my View, has suggested a Meaning of this Prophecy, exclusive of that which *St. Peter* and *St. Paul* have given.

136 S E R M O N VIII.

“ Seed, in this Prophecy, according to him,
 “ plainly signifies the Posterity of *Abraham*.
 “ And when it is affirmed, that in it all Na-
 “ tions of the Earth shall be blessed, it is
 “ meant, that the *Israelites* should be so bless-
 “ ed, or made so remarkably happy and suc-
 “ cessful in their Affairs by God, that when
 “ Men blessed one another, they should use
 “ this, or such like Form of Blessing, God
 “ bless you, as he did the *Israelites*, or Seed
 “ of *Abraham*. This appears to be the Sense
 “ of the Phrase, from its Use every where,
 “ but more particularly from what *Jacob* says
 “ on his Death-bed to his two Grand-chil-
 “ dred *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*, *Gen.* xlviii.
 “ 20. *And Jacob blessed Ephraim and Ma-*
 “ *nasseh that Day, saying, In thee shall Is-*
 “ *rael bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim*
 “ *and Manasseh*: That is, when the People
 “ shall bless any one, they shall say, God
 “ bless you, as he did *Ephraim* and *Manas-*
 “ *seh*. In like Manner therefore, to be bless-
 “ ed in *Abraham*’s Seed, signifies to be with-
 “ ed as prosperous as *Abraham*’s Descendants”.
 Thus far our Author.

In Answer to all which, it may with Truth
 be replied, that the Sense of the Phrase in the
 Text, which this Writer contends for, from
 its

S E R M O N VIII. 137

its Use every where, is not the real Sense of it any where. For after all this Talk at large, he could instance only in one Passage, where any Phrase like this occurs in his Sense, and even that comes not up to his Point, because it is not the same. For there the Expression is active. *In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh:* Whereas, in the Text, the Form of Speech is passive; *In thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed.* But every one knows, that great Difference of Sense often arises from Variation of Voices: And consequently the Use of a Phrase in the one Circumstance, is by no Means a certain Rule, whereby to judge of it in the other.

Besides, it should seem as if the Patriarch *Jacob*, when he blessed his Grand-children upon his Death-bed, did not think his Expression, even in the Active Form, sufficiently to denote his Meaning. And therefore he does not barely say, *in thee shall Israel bless:* Which, if the Sense of the Phrase had been so well established by Use, as our Adversary would persuade us, must have been singly intelligible; but adds, to make his Intention more plain, the Form that *Israel* should use, *viz. God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh.*

138 S E R M O N VIII.

For if the mere Phrase, in thee shall *Israel* bless, had implied all this, what follows had been altogether needless and downright Tautology. If then the Phrase, even in the active Use of it, which was far less liable to Mistake, yet needed somewhat to be added by Way of Explanation; can it be conceived, that the passive Expression in the Text, which obviously leads us to another Sense, if it was to have the very same Meaning, would not likewise much rather have been drawn out into full Length? Surely, in such a Case, God would have said unto *Abraham*; *In thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed, according to this Saying, God bless you, as he did the Israelites, or the Seed of Abraham.* We have the more Reason for insisting upon it, that this would have happened in the Passage of the Text, because it is some Hundreds of Years older than the Prediction of *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*. Now, a Phrase fully explained in the first Use of it, will be intelligible to future Times, without the Addition of the explicatory Words. But according to our Author's Account, *Abraham* is rewarded with a Promise from God; the Meaning of which was not to be come at, till
many

many Years after his Death. A Consequence that is big with manifest Absurdities.

Once more, the Saying of God to *Abraham* in the Text, according to the Writer above quoted, did not imply a Blessing to his Seed, but a Consequence of God's blessing his Seed, *i. e.* He would bless them to such a Degree, that all the Nations of the Earth should bless, by an Expression founded on their remarkable Prosperity. This he himself advances, when he speaks of the like Saying, with that of the Text, being repeated to *Jacob*. But for this very Reason, we cannot admit of the Sense he would impose on God's Saying to *Abraham*: For there he had no sooner declared, *That in his Seed all the Nations of the Earth shall be blessed*, but he immediately adds, *because thou hast obeyed my Voice*. This Declaration therefore was made to reward *Abraham's* signal Faith, and ready Compliance with the divine Command to sacrifice his Son. Temporal Blessings, of Increase to his Seed, and Victory over their Enemies, had been pronounced before; and the choicest Part of the Promise, because reserved for the last, was, *that in his Seed all the Families of the Earth should be blessed*, *i. e.* says our Author, in Consequence of
their

140 S E R M O N VIII.

their Prosperity before declared, the Seed of *Abraham* should become proverbial Instances of Happiness, in the good Wishes of all Nations to their best Friends. But would any Thing have been wanting to the Glory and Prosperity of *Abraham's* Seed, if no such Consequence had attended it? Very little sure, if any Thing at all. What a poor Reward then was this, for the transcendant Merit of *Abraham*, after the Promise of all earthly Felicity to his Seed, to be told only that, which was a mere natural Consequence of it, that the Nations of the Earth about them should observe it, and make it their Wish, that those they loved best, might be equally happy and prosperous! But what Absurdities will not the Advocates for Infidelity run into, whilst they are intent upon eluding the strong Evidences to the Truth of the Christian Religion! Rather than the Scriptures of the Old Testament shall appear to have been pertinently alledged by the Writers of the New, they make Meanings for them, that are inconsistent with common Sense.

Upon the Whole, if by the Seed of *Abraham*, in whom God promised, *that all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*, we understand his Posterity at large, either they were to be the Occasion of Blessing and Happiness

pinels to those Nations, or else those Nations were to bless, by wishing the Party or People blessed by them, as happy as the Seed or Posterity of *Abraham* were. But in the former of these Senses, the Promise never was fulfilled. For in no Time or Period, since the giving of this Prophecy, were the Seed of *Abraham*, at large, a publick Blessing to the World. As to the latter Sense, of the *Israelites* becoming Part of a proverbial Form of Blessing among all Nations, it does not appear, in Fact, ever so to have happened; nor is there one clear Instance to justify the Phraseology of such an Interpretation; and could we get over both these Difficulties, such a Construction ought to be rejected, because the Sense arising from it, is too low for the Occasion of this Promise or Prophecy. It follows therefore, that by the Seed of *Abraham* in the Text, is to be understood, not his Descendents in general, but some particular Person amongst them, in whom the Promise, *that in him all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*, was fulfilled. But where shall we find this Fountain of Blessing and Happiness to the World among the Posterity of *Abraham*? He that bids the fairest for this Character was *Solo-*

mon, whose Fame for Wisdom and Justice, and Splendor of living, spread far and wide in the World, and whose Example might serve for a Light to reform the Idolatry and Oppressions of those Times. But then it is also well known, that *Solomon's* was a mixt Character ; that thro' his Love of foreign Women, he was himself, at length, seduced to Idolatry ; and that during this Revolt from God, his Example was a Curse and a Mischief, rather than a Blessing to the Nations of the Earth around him.

In short, of all the numerous Descendents from *Abraham*, we know of none, in whom the Promise of the Text was tolerably verified, unless Jesus Christ our Lord was the Person : And he, in various Senses, was a Blessing to all the Nations of the Earth. In him God performed his Covenant with *Abraham*, sending him first to his Countrymen the *Jews*, to bless them, as *St. Peter* expresses himself, *in turning away every one of them from his Iniquities*. And as the Father sent his Son on this beatifick Errand to the lineal Descendents of *Abraham*, so did the Son, in like Manner, send his Apostles to teach all Nations, and to adopt them into the new Covenant of Mercy by Baptism ;
by

S E R M O N VIII. 143

by which Means the Sound of the blessed Gospel went into all Lands, and its Words unto the End of the World : The Kingdoms of the Earth became the Kingdoms of the Lord, and he the Governor among all People. If he has not been eventually a Blessing to all Nations of the Earth ; if even his Countrymen, after the Flesh, rejected his Offers ; and if some, who seemingly have embraced them, lose the happy Effects of his Religion, by not acting up to it, the Fault is entirely their own. God has done all that was necessary to complete his Promise to *Abraham*, except compelling all Nations to be actually blessed in him by irresistible Grace, which is a Method of fulfilling Prophecies, that would be unsuitable to his Wisdom and Goodness. Sufficient it is, that the Means to this Blessedness lies open to all Nations, who may be blessed thro' Christ, both here and hereafter, if they be not hindered by their own Obstinacy and Sinfulness. This Seed of *Abraham*, which we are speaking of, had no Mixtures in his moral Character, like the rest of his Descendents. He knew no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth. Not one of his Enemies, whilst he was on Earth, could convince him of Falseness, and

144 S E R M O N VIII.

his Judge acquitted him of all Fault. So that his Example, as well as his Doctrines and meritorious Sufferings, has blessed all Nations of the Earth : It has furnished them with an uniform and unerring Rule for their Behaviour, living and dying.

In a Word then, since Christ our Lord, and he only, has fulfilled the Prophecy of the Text in the Event of Things, great Reason had the Apostles, *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, to declare him the Seed therein mentioned. In so doing, they argue neither weakly nor impertinently ; but to all, who are concerned to maintain the divine Authority of the Old Testament, and particularly the Writings of *Moses*, clearly, closely, and unanswerably. All such, and to such only, the New Testament offers the Evidence of Prophecy, must either give up the Law and the Prophets, or else must own, that Jesus is therein foretold to be the blessed Saviour of the World.

S E R M O N IX.

P S A L M xvi. ver. 8, 9, 10. and
Part of the 11th.

*I have set the Lord always before me :
Because he is at my Right-hand, I
shall not be moved. Therefore my
Heart is glad, and my Glory re-
joiceth ; my Flesh also shall rest in Hope.
For thou wilt not leave my Soul in
Hell : Neither wilt thou suffer thine
holy One to see Corruption. Thou
wilt shew me the Path of Life.*

TH E S E Words, in their obvious and
literal Acceptation, foretel, that God
would raise the Person, concerning
whom they are spoken, from the Dead, be-
fore his Body should putrify or corrupt. And
that they were spoken of Christ our Lord,
is both affirmed and proved by St. Peter, in
the 2d Chap. of *Acts* : Whose Reasonings on
VOL. I. L this

this Head well merit a Recital, and our particular Attention. *David*, says he, *speaketh concerning him, i. e. Jesus our Lord. I foresaw the Lord always before my Face; for he is on my Right-hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did my Heart rejoice, and my Tongue was glad: Moreover also my Flesh shall rest in Hope: Because thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see Corruption: Thou hast made known to me the Ways of Life: Thou shalt make me full of Joy with thy Countenance. Men and Brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this Day: Therefore, being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an Oath to him, that of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the Flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his Throne: He seeing this before, spake of the Resurrection of Christ, that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither his Flesh did see Corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are Witnesses.*

Since therefore, *St. Peter* not only affirms, that the Prophecy in the Text belonged to Christ, but also goes about to prove it by an Appeal to the Reason of the unbelieving
Jews

Jews his Auditors ; we are under a Necessity of defending his Argument, and of shewing, that it is pertinent and conclusive against them.

Now the Reasoning of *St. Peter* may be reduced into the following Assertions. *First*, That *David* was a Prophet. *Secondly*, That he had an Assurance given him, and confirmed by an Oath, that of his Seed, according to the Flesh, God would raise up Christ the Saviour of the World. *Thirdly*, That tho' he utters this Prophecy in the 16th *Psalms*, as if it concerned his own Person, yet it never was literally fulfilled in him. *Fourthly*, Therefore, according to the common Practice of the *Jewish* Interpreters in other like Cases, it was most reasonable to apply the Expressions as spoken of Christ, his blessed Antitype and Descendent. *Fifthly*, That the Expressions of the Prophecy, which imply a Resurrection, were actually and literally fulfilled in Jesus our Lord, as the Apostles, who were Eye-witnesses of that Fact, unanimously and steadily testified. *Sixthly*, and lastly, That the Prophecy was not only truly, but also miraculously fulfilled in Jesus.

First, St. Peter puts the *Jews*, his Auditors, in Mind that *David* was a Prophet. With an Audience made up of unbelieving *Gentiles*, this would have been a Suggestion of little Weight: They had no Concern about *David's* prophetick Character; and therefore if the Prediction, delivered in the Text by him, had never been in any Sense fulfilled, their Side in the Dispute with Christians would profit by it, as they denied not only the Psalms, but also every other Part of the Old Testament to be written by Inspiration. But, on the other Hand, the *Jews* were obliged to stand up for *David's* prophetick Claim; and by giving up a Prophecy of his, as never fulfilled, they would in effect have given up their Religion. In Consequence of this, the *Jews* were bound to assign a real Completion, in some Kind or other, to the Prophecy of *David*, that God would *not leave his Soul in Hell*, nor *suffer his holy One to see Corruption*.

Secondly, It was also a received Maxim among the *Jews*, that God had sworn with an Oath unto *David*, that of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the Flesh, God would raise up *Messias*, or *Christ*.

It was the Doctrine of the Scribes in our Saviour's Days, as we learn from *Matth. xxii. ver. 42.* that Christ was *the Son of David*. And hence it was, that when the common People addressed themselves to Jesus for Cure of their Infirmities, their Style is, *Jesus thou Son of David*. Again, when he made his triumphant Entry into *Jerusalem*, the Populace apprehending that Pomp to be the Commencement of Messiah's Reign, call it the Kingdom of their Father *David*, intimating, that therein was to be fulfilled the Promises made to *David* of a Son and Successor to sit upon his Throne ; which, though it had been in some Measure verified in *Solomon*, had not its last and fullest Completion till the Coming of Christ. And on this Account it is, that neither the Reign of *Solomon*, nor of any Royal Descendents of his, is ever called the Kingdom of *David* ; that Title being peculiar to the Times of Christ. This Community of Names between *David* and *Christ*, made it less wonderful to the *Jews*, that the Psalmist should foretel the Events that should befall Messiah, speaking all the Time as in his own Person, and of himself. They must have observed also, that the Prophets, which followed afterwards, accord herein with the

150 S E R M O N I X.

Pſalmiſt, calling Meſſiah by the Name of *David*, and predicting, that God would raiſe up unto *Iſrael David* to be a King, and a Prince over them, many Ages after his Death, and at the very Inſtant when his Royal Houſe was on the Point of loſing all its worldly Grandeur and Privileges. Theſe things being conſidered, it ought not to have ſeemed hard to the *Jews* of our Saviour's Days, that he or his Apoſtles applied ſome things, which *David* ſpeaks ſeemingly in his own Perſon, and particularly the Prophecy in the Text, to the myſtical *David* of the Old Teſtament, *i. e.* to Chriſt our Lord. Becauſe,

Thirdly, Tho' the Pſalmiſt in the Place and Prophecy now under Conſideration, literally taken, ſpeaks of himſelf, that God would *not leave his Soul in Hell*, nor *ſuffer him to ſee Corruption* ; yet it was not ſtrictly, nor in any tolerable ſort verified of him.

To this Effect argues the Apoſtle of the Text, putting the *Jews*, to whom he ſpoke, in Mind that the Patriarch *David* was both dead and buried, and that his Sepulchre was with them to that Day. His Soul therefore was ſtill left in Hell, not the Place of Torment ordinary ſo called, but in *Hades*, the common Reſidence of departed Souls,
after

after Death has separated them from their respective Bodies ; and his Flesh saw Corruption, being by Length of Time mouldered into Dust, the Remains of which even then lay in his Sepulchre, which continued, as it was at first, shut up unto that very Day. Whereas the Person, of whom *David* speaks, was plainly to be raised from the Dead ; his Soul was not to be left in the common Receptacle of separate Spirits, but to be reunited unto his dead Body, before it had lain long enough in the Grave to putrify, which was what, in the hot Climate of *Judea*, ordinarily happened in four Days.

It is not to be wondered at, if the *Jews*, notwithstanding the Incongruity of these Circumstances with the Case of *David*, should insist upon it, that, in some Sense or other, they were verified in him. For if they belong to any one else, Messiah must be the Person, who is the only one of whom the Psalmist uses to predict, speaking still in his own Person. But the Prejudices and Mistakes of that stubborn People concerning the Messiah, will not suffer them thus to understand *David* in the Prophecy of the Text : For their Messiah is never to die and be buried ; but is to live, to reign, and to conquer forever.

Whatever, therefore, the Prophecy concerning a Resurrection may import, the Christ of the *Jews* cannot be the Subject thereof. Whether it implies a literal Rising from the Dead, or a figurative Deliverance from Adversities and extreme Dangers, the *Ben David*, or Messiah of the *Jews*, in their Conceits is privileged from all Calamities, being neither to die, nor be in any Sense unfortunate in Life : According to them therefore *David's* own History must be the sole View of his Prophecy, whatever Violence is done to the Letter of it, by such an Application.

It must be confessed, that the Writings and Language of *Eastern* People abound with bold and strong Figures, and that whoever construes them always according to the Letter, will sometimes give them a Meaning different from the Intention of the Writer. It must also be acknowledged, that *David* was frequently in great Dangers, Difficulties and Troubles, from which it pleased God to save him by gracious and signal Providences. But tho' *Eastern* Writers are daring in their Imagery, they nevertheless observe some Degree of Proportion. And therefore, though *David's* Troubles were great, and his Dan-
gers

gers of Death sometimes extreme ; yet unless they answer, in some Sort, the Prediction of the Text, allegorically understood, it cannot reasonably be applied to them. For Instance, if we should admit that high Distresses and urgent Dangers may, in the Style of an *Eastern* Prophet, be signified by dying, which yet is very questionable ; and that consequently Deliverances therefrom may be foretold under the Emblem of a Resurrection ; yet that foretold in the Text, being a very speedy one, that was to follow soon after Death, and before the usual Time for Putrefaction of the dead Body, must imply, if figuratively understood, that *David's* Troubles and Dangers were to be only of a short Continuance. But was this Circumstance verified in the History of that Prince ? No, by no Means. The great Trials of his Life were those which followed *Saul's* Enmity to him, and his own Sins in the Case of *Uriah* ; both of which continued to exercise him for several Years, and the latter of them held almost till the Day of his Death. So that had *David* foretold his own Afflictions and Dangers in the Text, and his Deliverance from both in the End, the Allegorical Prophecy must have run thus : *That God*
would

154 S E R M O N I X.

would not for ever leave his Soul in Hell; and tho' he suffered his holy One to see Corruption, yet in time would he restore his Body to Life, and once more animate his Dust. To see Corruption is a strong Expression, which therefore must have its Meaning, and yet can signify nothing, if *David* was the Subject of this Prophecy, that justly corresponds with the History of his Troubles and Deliverances. Thus we see that the Prediction of the Text, whether literally or figuratively interpreted, was never verified in *David*; and therefore the *Jews*, out of Regard to the Psalmist's Character, should look out for some more consistent and probable Meaning. But indeed, in other Instances, as well as this, the Royal Prophet is very little beholden to his unbelieving Countrymen, who out of Hatred to the Christian Cause, and because they will not allow that he spake of Jesus, as a Type of him in his own Person, represent him, saying Things of himself that exceed all Truth and Proportion. And whereas he is a just Standard of the true Sublime, who in all his Poetick Flights never loses Sight of Decorum and Sobriety; the *Jews* explain his Compositions into one continued Catachresis. In a Word, none but a Christian

Reader

Reader and Expofitor can fee and fet forth the real Beauties of *David's* Writings ; and under the Hands of a *Jewifh* Commentator, he appears a bad Poet, and a worfe Prophet.

Since then, without the utmoft Violence to the Words of the Pfalmift in the Text, tho' feemingly fpoken of himfelf, they can not be fo interpreted,

Fourthly, According to the Practice of the *Jews* themfelves, in other Cafes of this Nature, it is moft reasonable to underftand them of *Jesus*, the bleffed Antitype and Defcendent of *David*.

Of this Practice of the *Jews* we have, at leaft, one clear Inftance in their ancient Expositions of the 7th ver. of the 2d *Pfalm*, where *David* fays : *The Lord hath faid unto me, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee.* Here *David* feemingly fpeaks of himfelf ; and yet all the ancient *Jewifh* Writers expound him to mean *Mefſiah* : Plainly, becauſe what the Pfalmift ſeems to ſay of himſelf was too high, and too grand for him ; not in any Degree answering the Condition of mere Man. And were the *Jews* conſiſtent with themſelves, they would, in the Paſſage of the Text, allow *David* alſo to have ſpoken in his own Perſon, not as the

156 S E R M O N IX.

Subject of the Prophecy, but as the Type of him that was so : Because the Event predicted never was fulfilled in him, either literally or figuratively. And so I make no Doubt they would have done, if they could have applied it to Christ, without overturning their favourite Hypothesis of his being to conquer and triumph, without Interruption from Sufferings of any Kind, and especially from Death ; whereas the Person, of whom *David* spake, according to the Letter of the Prediction, was to die ; and, if we take it figuratively, was at least to be afflicted, and brought into Danger of Death. But thus fluctuating and disuniform will Men always be, who espouse an Hypothesis with strong Prejudices, and go about to defend what is indefensible.

Fifthly, As the Prophecy in the Text was neither literally nor mystically fulfilled in the Person of *David*, so was it to the utmost Exactness verified in the Resurrection of Jesus our Lord, of which the Apostles were Eye-witnesses. For he really and truly died : His Soul went into *Hades* among the separate Souls of other dead Men, and his Body was laid in the Grave, where the Bodies of the Departed use to see Corruption.

But

But his Soul was left in Hell only till the third Day, and his Body was at the same time raised from the Grave before it had seen Corruption. If therefore the Prophecy in the Text could not, *a priori*, be ascertained to Jesus, the Event undoubtedly assigns it to him. And on this Circumstance St. Peter lays a great Stress in the 2d of *Acts*, which would appear most evident, if his Words had been more accurately rendered, than they are in our present Translation. For the 7th *ver.* should be thus expressed: *He, i. e. David spake of the Resurrection of Christ for, or because his Soul was not left in Hell, neither did his Flesh see Corruption.* The Event therefore, in the Judgment of this first Apostle, directs us to the right Understanding of the Prophecy before us. And if before the Resurrection of our Lord any Doubt remained concerning the Person of whom *David* spake, after that happened it seemed to have been entirely removed, especially when to this Fact was added that other of his Ascension into Heaven: For tho' others besides him were raised to Life again soon after Death, yet all those died again, their Souls were at last left in Hell, and their Flesh saw Corruption: But Jesus, and he alone, being

158 S E R M O N IX.

raised from the Dead, died no more, Death had no more Dominion over him. So that since none but Jesus literally fulfilled the Prophecy, he, and he only, or at least principally, was meant thereby : For it would be against all Reason to apply it unto *David*, by a strained and far fetcht Accommodation, and at the same time to deny Jesus any Concern in it, who alone, of all Mankind that we know of, fully and exactly verified the Prediction. *St. Peter* therefore had Reason on his Side, when he argued from the exact Correspondence of this Event with the Words of *David*, that he spake thereof. To explain Prophecies before they are compleated, by merely human Helps, may be a Work of Uncertainty : But the literal Completion of a Prophecy explains and fixes its meaning beyond all reasonable Dispute. For no *Jew* sure will pretend, that the Resurrection of Christ, by mere Accident, compleated the Prediction of the Text, which was intended to respect *David* only ; since, upon the Principles of *Judaism*, God is the Master and Controller of all Events ; and, when his blessed Spirit dictated to *David* the Prophecy of the Text, knew it would be eventually compleated in the Resurrection of Jesus,

Jesus, and therefore doubtless intended it should be so. If he had designed thereby only to have prefigured *David's* Deliverance from Troubles and Dangers, he would surely have taken Care to express it in plain Language, and not in such, as would much better agree with another and a different Event. In short, the *Jews*, to whom St. *Peter* argued from the Prophecy in the 16th *Psalms*, believed it to come from God, and could not suppose but that God, in the Order of Events, would always take care that his People should not be distracted by their accidental Coincidence with Predictions, that no Way concerned them. Granting, therefore, the Resurrection of Jesus to have been a real Fact, it was as surely foretold in the 16th *Psalms*, as God is infinitely wise and just and powerful.

Sixthly, and lastly, The Resurrection of Jesus was not a common Event, such as happens thro' the Free Agency of Men, and is rather permitted than appointed by God, (tho' even there it appears inconsistent with the divine Perfections to suffer those, which would accidentally fulfill his own Predictions, more exactly than the Events really intended thereby did ;) I say, the Resurrection
of

of Christ from the Dead was not a common, but a miraculous Event, in which God was the sole Agent ; which renders it impossible to the last Degree, that he should speak of such a Thing, almost in Terms, so many Ages before it happened, and yet not mean it ; but another and very different Event, with which the Expression of the Prophecy, after all, cannot well be made to agree. Would God work a Miracle, that must necessarily mislead his People in the Application of ancient Prophecies ; or, at least, suspend and confound their Judgment in that Point ? For if they considered the Correspondence of the two Events with the Words of the Prophecy, nothing but Prejudice could hinder them from seeing, that the Resurrection of Jesus came much nearer to the Language of the 16th *Psalms*, than the Deliverance of *David* from wordly Perils and Afflictions ; and if they compared the Importance of the Events in themselves, how could they do otherwise than think that the raising up a Descendent of *David* from the Dead, was a more worthy Subject of Prophecy, than a mere Act of Providence in saving *David* himself, how signal soever it might be.

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Upon the whole then we find, that St. *Peter's* Argument in the 2d *Chap.* of *Acts*, to prove from the Event, that *David* was not the Subject of his own Prediction in the 16th *Psalms*, and that *Jesus*, in the Circumstance of his Resurrection, was the Person therein spoken of, was just, pertinent, and logical. And indeed so much is silently confessed by that Writer, who lately has attempted to demonstrate the Contrary, of many Predictions cited from the Old Testament, and applied to Christ in the Writings of the New Testament : For he has not, as far as I know, or can remember, tried on the noble Prophecy of the Text, to make it speak a different Sense from what is put upon it by the Apostle so oft mentioned : It so clearly and evidently relates to Christ's Resurrection, that it looks more like a History than a Prediction of that Fact. And had there been the least Pretence for questioning the Antiquity and Genuineness of the 16th *Psalms*, I doubt not but the Plainness of the Prophecy would have been urged against it, as an Argument that it was devised after the Fact to which it relates. But as there is no Room for any Suggestion

162 S E R M O N I X.

of this Kind, my Text will always stand an unquestionable Evidence for the Truth of Christianity from Prophecy.

It may indeed be said, that the *Jews*, to whom St. *Peter* urged the Words of *David* out of the 16th *Psalms*, denied the Fact of *Jesus's* Resurrection. But still as the Apostles had the Evidence of almost all their Senses for the Truth of that Event, and therefore were confident of its Certainty, they stand acquitted in Point of Reason and Justice for applying the Prophecy of *David* to it : They argued upon the Case, neither weakly nor illogically : They offered their own Testimony, which was unquestionable for the Truth of the Fact, and argued from it with Reason, which ought to have prevailed. If neither the one nor the other was accepted, the Fault was in the Audience ; and the inspired Preachers of Christianity assigned Reasons on its Behalf, which could not justly be gainsaid.

S E R M O N X.

DEUT. xviii. 18, 19 Verses.

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren, like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not hearken unto my Words, which he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him.

THE Beginning of the Text, with some little Variation, makes the 15th ver. of this Chap. There Moses, speaking in his own Name, says, *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy Brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.* And these last are the Words cited by St. Peter, in the 3d Chap. of *Acts*, as fulfilled in the Person, Character,

and Mission of Jesus Christ. The Drift of the Apostle's Speech there, plainly was to persuade the *Jerusalem Jews* to repent of murdering the Prince of Life, and to be converted, that this, and all their Sins, might be blotted out. The better to effect this, he represents to them, that their own *Moses*, among other Prophets, foretold of those Days, and the Events which happened in them. Here, therefore, it must be confessed, that an inspired Person, not only applies a Prophecy out of the Old Testament, as fulfilled in Christ, but makes it a Topick of Persuasion. If then there be nothing of Argument in it; nothing that might, with tolerable Sense, or Colour of Reason, be urged to *Jews*, to persuade them to a Belief in Christ, the Unbelievers shall have free Permission to call it an impertinent Allegation, made use of by the Followers of Christ to support his Claim to the Messiahship. Certain it is, that *Moses* speaks of a single Prophet; and if, of all those who succeeded *Moses* in that Character, no one comes so near to the Description here given, as Christ did, in all Reason the Prophecy is most likely to have been fulfilled in him; and

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as so fulfilled, it was pertinently cited by St. *Peter*.

Of this Consequence, the Men we have to do with are aware, and therefore strongly contend, that the singular Number there stands for the Plural, a Prophet for Prophets, according to the Custom of the *Hebrew* Language. Why they call this the Custom of the *Hebrew* Language, I see not, there being nothing peculiar to it, in this Respect, to distinguish it from other Languages. And, I think, one Rule ought to serve all Languages in such a Case; which is always, where it can be, to understand what is therein written, literally; and unless there is a plain Necessity for understanding a singular Number plurally, never to do it. Our Adversaries indeed pretend there is such a Necessity in the Place before us.

Let us hear then what they have to say; why, in my Text, *Moses* cannot be supposed to prophesy of any single and eminent Prophet, in the Circumstances and Character of Messiah, to be raised up at the Time when Jesus appeared in the World.

First, they tell us, that the Context requires *Moses* here to be understood, not of a single Prophet, but of a Succession of Prophets; not of prophetic Direction, that should be afforded the *Israelites* many Ages after, or in the Times of *Jesus*, but to commence immediately on their Settlement in *Canaan*. For, say they, in the Verses immediately preceding that which is cited by *St. Peter*, *Moses* tells the *Jews*, *That when they came into the Land of Canaan, they should not learn to do after the Abominations thereof, and particularly that there should not be found among them any one that useth Divination, or an Observer of Times, or an Enchanter, or a Witch, or a Charmer, or a Consulter with familiar Spirits, or a Wizard, or a Necromancer. For all, says he, that do these Things, are an Abomination to the Lord; and because of these Things, the Lord thy God doth drive these People out from before thee. For these Nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto Observers of Times, and unto Diviners. But as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee to do so.* Then follow the Words of the Prophecy. *The Lord thy God will raise*

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up into thee a Prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy Brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. All which, continue the Objectors, is as much as to say, when ye come into *Canaan*, do not hearken to a Diviner or Enchanter, &c. as the *Canaanites* do; for the Lord will give you a Prophet of your own Brethren, inspired like me, to whom ye shall hearken: Or rather, do not hearken to Diviners, &c. but to Prophets, who shall be raised up among you.

Now, say they, that the Words cited must relate to a Succession of Prophets, to begin upon the *Jews* taking Possession of the Land of *Canaan* is manifest; because the raising up a Prophet, to whom the *Jews* were to hearken, is the Reason given, why they should not hearken to a Diviner, &c. when they came into that Land: Which Reason would have no Force, unless they were to have an immediate Prophet in *Canaan*. For what Sense or Coherence is there in saying, Do not hearken to such Diviners as are in *Canaan* when ye come there; for ye shall have a Prophet of your own, to whom ye shall hearken 2000 Years after ye shall come there.

Could raising up a Prophet, whom it was impossible to consult in their Exigencies, be a Reason to hinder them from consulting Diviners when they came into *Canaan*? And is not the raising up a Prophet, when they came into *Canaan*, a good Reason, why they should not hearken to Diviners there? because they would then have a Prophet of their own to answer all their Exigencies, and need not go to Diviners.

I have given this Objection at large, and in the Words of its Author: Because it seems the strongest and most plausible of any Thing, that has been offered, why the Prophecy of the Text should not be understood of Messiah in the Person of Jesus.

But in answer thereto, it is first to be observed, that the Connexion of this Prophecy with what goes before it, tho' the whole of the Objection depends upon it, has, in great Measure, been taken for granted, or at best has been but poorly and lamely made out. For, possibly the Verses preceding the Prophecy, may be utterly independant of it; and
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if they relate not to it, if the Prophecy begins a new Sense, the Context on that Side will give no Light into its Meaning, and ought not to be argued from for any such Purpose. The Objector indeed calls the Prophecy a Reason of what goes before : But in so doing, he begs the Question. There is no illative, or causal Particle, introducing it as a Reason : And yet in the 12th and 14th *ver.* where it is on all Hands allowed, that a Reason is given, why the *Israelites* should not seek after, or hearken to Diviners, the causal Particle *for* is expressed : From whence it should seem to follow, that if the Prophecy in Question had likewise been a Reason respecting the same Prohibition, it would, like the former ones, have been introduced with *for*, or some such Particle.

As the Prophecy has no visible Connection with what goes before ; on account of which, we may suppose it to be an Argument against consulting Wizards or Diviners ; so neither does the Reason of the Thing make such a Supposal at all necessary. If a Command from God against such Practices, was not a sufficient Motive to Obedience, but Reasons
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170 S E R M O N X.

must be added for further Inforcement, such Reasons had been given before any Mention of the Prophecy, *viz.* 1st. That the Practices forbid were odious unto God : *For all that do these Things are an Abomination unto the Lord.* 2dly, That because of these Abominations, *the Lord their God had driven out the Nations from before them* ; plainly implying, that if they should commit the like Abominations, they would have Reason to expect the same Severities. 3dly, That in hearkening to Diviners, they would become like unto those Nations, and, in Consequence of that, would defeat the great End, for which God singled them out from other Nations, *viz. that they might be a peculiar People.* Again, if no Reasons against hearkening to Diviners, &c. drawn from their Hopes, or their Fears, or from a Sense of Duty, were sufficient ; if they were only to be dissuaded from those Abominations by the Assurance of an Equivalent, some standing Oracle to solve every emergent Doubt, and to be consulted in every Exigence ; was it at all necessary that this should be done by a Promise of a Succession of Prophets among the *Israelites*, after their Settlement in the Land of *Canaan* ?
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Were they not to continue the Lord's People after that Event, as they had been before; and, consequently, had they the least Reason to fear a Failure of divine Direction on needful Occasions? *Moses* indeed was to die before the *Israelites* should take Possession of *Canaan*: But what then? Did Prophecy begin with *Moses*, that, without a Promise of Succession in that sacred Character, they should apprehend lest it might end with him? Or, while he lived, was he the only Prophet among God's People? Were not *Aaron* and *Miriam* endued with the Spirit of Prophecy in *Moses's* Days; and tho' *Moses* had no Successor descended from him, yet *Aaron* had the Promise of an hereditary Priesthood, and, without any further or more express Promise, it might be presumed, that in his Posterity, as in his own Person, the Priestly and prophetick Offices would continue united. Nay, supposing this to have been doubtful, it was out of all Question, that in every Succession to the High Priesthood, the Descendents from *Aaron* would wear the Breast-plate of Judgment, in which, by divine Appointment, were put the *Urim* and *Thummim*, by which God was to answer all the Doubts and Perplexi-

plexities of his People: So that there could be no absolute Necessity for his giving a Promise, to raise Prophets successively in *Canaan*, to answer such Queries, on Account whereof Charmers and Diviners were wont to be consulted. Nay, before *Moses* delivered these Words, the *Israelites* not only knew that this was to be the Case hereafter, but with their own Eyes they had seen this wonderful and miraculous Ephod transferred, upon the Death of *Aaron*, to *Eleazar* his Son and Successor in the High Priesthood. And as it were on Purpose to prevent, in the People, all further Anxiety about their future Settlement, after the Death of *Moses* he was appointed to invest *Joshua*, his Successor, and himself also most probably at that Time a Prophet, by Imposition of Hands, accompanied with the Solemnity of a Charge; to invest him, I say, with some of his Honour, that all the Congregation of the Children of *Israel* may be obedient. To which is immediately added, *And he shall stand before Eleazar the Priest, who shall ask Counsel for him after the Judgment of Urim before the Lord: At his Word shall they go out, and at his Word shall they come in; both he and all the Children of Israel*

rael *with him*. After, therefore, such a Foretaste as this, could it be supposed, that the *Israelites* needed any other Equivalent for Charmers or Wizards, or Necromancers, upon the Prohibition of them, besides the standing Oracle abovementioned? Or, if any other was necessary, could they suspect that God would supply them by Halves, and, not unpromised, give them a Succession of Prophets, or whatever else of that Kind was wanting, to prevent them from giving into the Abominations of the *Canaanites*, whose Lands had been forfeited by such execrable Superstitions? Lastly, tho' the Being of Prophets, after the Death of *Moses*, is not any where promised, yet such a Thing is evidently supposed, *Numb. xii. ver. 6.* where God saith, *If there be a Prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a Vision, and speak unto him in a Dream.* This then being a sufficient Ground to the *Israelites*, for expecting Prophets afterwards to supply all the pretended Uses of Divination, there could be no Occasion for promising them in the Prophecy before us. 'Tis true, God speaks in the 12th of *Numbers* singularly of a Prophet only: But then, so does he in the Promise

Promise of the Text ; and if, notwithstanding this, a Prophet may there stand for a long Succession of Prophets, as the Objection of our Adversaries supposes, we have a Right to the same Liberty of Interpretation in the 12th of *Numbers*, and may, with equal Reason, insist upon it, that God is speaking, under the Name of a Prophet, of many and successive ordinary Prophets. There is the more Room for an Exposition of this Sort in the 12th of *Numbers*, because there God is shewing how superior to all other inspired Persons *Moses* was, by the immediate Nature of his Communications with him : He spake to him Mouth to Mouth even apparently. But is it natural to suppose, that he excelled one Prophet only in this Particular, and not all, as many as should come after him, in the ordinary prophetick Office ?

I might add, that the Reason assigned for the Promise of a Succession of Prophets, seems unworthy of so great a Blessing : And that People, who would not obey a divine Command, so strongly inculcated as that against Diviners appears to have been, without a Promise of true Prophets to supply the Place
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of those Impostors, seems utterly unworthy of being gratified by so extraordinary a Condescension.

Upon the Whole then, it appears against all Reason and Likelihood, that God should foretel the raising up a Succession of Prophets, merely to make the Prohibition of so much Wickedness, as was practised by the *Canaanites*, and occasioned their entire Excision, go down with the Children of *Israel*. To explain a Prophet into a Succession of Prophets, like unto *Moses*, is doing a Violence to Scripture, which can never be excused, but by an absolute and apparent Necessity: But to do thus, not only without good Grounds, but against all Reason and Probability, is intolerable.

I hope it does by this Time appear, that the 15 ver. in which *Moses* foretells, *that God would raise up a Prophet like unto him*, has little, if any, Respect to what goes before it; and consequently there is no Reason, by a Prophet, to understand a Succession of Men favoured with the Knowledge of future Events: But for aught that has been yet

176 S E R M O N X.

advanced against it, *St. Peter* might pertinently apply the Prophecy to Christ our Lord.

The next Attempt of Infidels, is to defeat this Application, by appealing to the Words that follow the Prophecy. But it is to be hoped, that the Context on that Side the Text will prove as little serviceable to their Cause, as the Context on the other Side has done. Let us then hear how their Argument proceeds.

The Words of God by *Moses*, which follow the Promise of a Prophet, evidently shew, that by that Promise Prophets were intended, in laying down a Rule for the Trial of the Prophet beforementioned, in such Manner, as implies a Succession of Prophets was intended under the Terms *raising up a Prophet*. The Words are. *But the Prophet which shall presume to speak a Word in my Name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the Name of other Gods, shall die. And if thou say in thine Heart, How shall we know the Word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a Prophet speaketh in the Name of the Lord, if the Thing follow not,*
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nor come to pass, that is the Thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, Thou shalt not be afraid of him.

If you can imagine, adds the Objector, that these Words do not determine to raise up a Prophet, to signify the raising up a Succession of Prophets, still Jesus will be excluded by them from being the Prophet intended, who could not possibly be subject to Death, or any other Punishment, for speaking a Word in the Name of God, which God had not commanded him to speak, or for speaking in the Name of other Gods, and consequently could not have this Rule laid down for him.

Now we so far agree with the Objector, and for the Reason he has given, that if the Prophet for the Trial of whom, the above Rule was laid down, be the same with the Prophet which God promised to raise up, then Jesus, or the Messiah, is utterly excluded from being thereby meant. But has he proved that the same Prophet is spoken of in the two Places? Or has he so much as attempted to prove it? No: He takes it for granted,
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that it is a continued Speech of one and the same Prophet, and argues accordingly.

And yet how absurd is this in every View of the Thing? *Moses*, according to the Objection, first tells the *Israelites*, *That God would raise unto them a Prophet, not of the ordinary Sort, but equal to himself; one to whom they were to hearken, under the severest Penalties, because God would put his Words into his Mouth, and he should speak unto them all that God should command him.* And yet this same Prophet is immediately after, if our Adversaries judge right, represented as capable of speaking what God had not commanded him in his Name; nay, of speaking in the Name of other Gods. This so unlikely a Thing in itself, had it really been *Moses's* Intention, would surely have been expressed in the plainest Manner: And he would have have said, *But if this Prophet shall presume to speak a Word in my Name, which I have not commanded, &c.* then indeed it had been plain, that one and the same Prophet was the Subject of *Moses's* Discourse. Whereas the 20th *ver.* begins in such a Manner, as sufficiently evinces, that the Discourse about the Prophet,

S E R M O N X. 179

Prophet, whom the Lord should raise, was at an End : And that from saying how dangerous it should be, for those who did not hearken to the true and eminent Prophet abovenamed, he was proceeding to a very different Case, *viz.* the Treatment that should be given to a false Prophet. But the Prophet, says *Moses*, *which shall presume to speak a Word in my Name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the Name of other Gods, even that Prophet shall die* : i. e. Whatever Prophet shall so behave, not in the least insinuating, that the particular Prophet before promised, and at the same Time so highly magnified, might be capable of such gross Misbehaviour. This is the plain and obvious State of the Case, and, accordingly, has been so understood by all the World, except the Objector, All the Translators, ancient and modern, have rendered the 20th Verse in such a Manner, as shews, that they thought it began a new Sense ; and that the Rule laid down for discovering a false Prophet in the 22d Verse, had no Relation to the Prophet spoken of in the 15th and 18th Verses. Particularly the ancient Greek Translation, called the *Septuagint*,

180 S E R M O N X.

makes the 20th Verse begin thus ; *But whatsoever Prophet, &c.* The Objector knew this, or at least ought to have known it ; and therefore, by putting his own novel and unnatural Sense of the Passage upon us, without Shew or Pretence of Reason, but taking that for granted, which all the World will dispute with him, has too plainly shewn, that his Intention was not to inform, or gravely to debate the right Application of this Prophecy, but to deceive the Ignorant, and surprize the Unwary. In so plain a Case therefore, I shall add but one Word more. We may observe, that after the 1st Mention of the Prophet to be raised by God, so long as he is plainly the Subject of the Discourse, the Word Prophet is not repeated, but the Expressions distinctive of that particular Person are *He, Him, or His*. If therefore the 20th Verse had born any Relation to that Prophet, the same Mode of Expression had continued, and the Connection between the 20th and the foregoing Verses had been in this, or some such Manner : But if *he, i. e.* the Prophet above-mentioned, *shall presume to speak a Word in my Name, which I have not commanded him to speak, &c. even he shall die.* Whereas the

20th

20th Verse begins with the Mention of the Prophet in general, and by the adverbative Particle *but*, which stands at the Head of it, seems rather to be in Opposition to, than in Connection with the entire Subject going before.

We are told further, that the raising up a Succession of Prophets among the *Jews*, seems necessary to be done, in order to keep them in a State of Separation from the *Canaanites*, when they came among them, and at a Distance from their Abominations, as appears to be intended by all the Laws given to the *Jews*.

And this no one denies or disputes. A Succession of Prophets was proper, at least for the End here assigned, and for other good Purposes: And such a Succession they probably had. But what is all this to the present Question? Because a Succession of Prophets was expedient for the Religious Welfare of the *Jews* in the Land of *Canaan*, will it be any Consequence, that therefore such a Succession must have been promised them by *Moses*, and in the particular Pro-

phcey, about the Meaning of which we are at present debating? No surely. This therefore is utterly foreign to the Point in dispute, and may be dismissed as such without further Consideration.

Lastly, it is insinuated, that “As the *Jews* had, through the Existence of their Government, a Succession of Prophets bred up, and formed in Schools and Colleges under Master-Prophets, so it is reasonable to think, that there should be some Remains in the Institution, even in the short Account of the old *Jewish* Laws contained in the *Pentateuch*; and that the Place before us, which, must be allowed, may imply such an Institution, and which is the sole Place in all the *Pentateuch*, that seems to have any Relation to an Institution of Prophets, has a direct Reference to that Institution”.

It has already been complained of, as a great Violence to the Passage under Consideration, to make the Prediction of one single Prophet, distinguished by high and strong Characteristicks, stand for more Prophets than
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one, nor those only coeval and contemporary, but in order of Succession : Now it pleases our Adversaries to strain the Passage a great deal further ; and this single Prophet is to imply, not barely many Prophets, and those successive to each other, but also the Method and Discipline by which that Method was to be kept up ; namely, Schools and Colleges, wherein Novices were to be trained up under Master-Prophets, as to an Art or Science. But can any Man of sound or sober Intellect bear to be told, that Words of such plain and unquestionable Meaning, should directly refer to an Institution, of which they carry not the least Signature, or faintest Impression ? And after all, those Schools of the Prophets were probably an Institution no older than *Samuel*, who seems to have been their Founder, for which Cause it is highly unreasonable to expect Remains of an Institution in the *Pentateuch*, which had no Being till 400 Years after those Books were written. It is also very doubtful, whether those Schools and Colleges were any more than religious Seminaries, out of which it might, and sometimes did, please God to chuse Prophets : Certain it is false, what our

unbelieving Adversaries would suggest, that young Men were trained up to Prophecy in a scientifick Way. In a large Sense of the Word, all these Novices might be termed Prophets of the Lord; but that they all arrived at the Gift of foretelling future Events, is, to say the least of it, very uncertain. There is therefore no manner of Force in this last Argument: The Facts advanced in it are misrepresented, and were they true, would not serve the Purpose intended by them. Thus I have considered, and, as I hope, refuted the Arguments urged for explaining the Prophecy before us, in such a Manner, as to make it not primarily, or rather not at all applicable to Messiah; and thereby have made the Way open for shewing, that the Characters given of the Prophet foretold in it, cannot reasonably suit with any other Person: Which, God willing, shall be the Subject of my next Lecture.

S E R M O N XI.

D E U T. xviii. 15.

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy Brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken.

IN my last Discourse from these Words, I considered, and endeavoured to refute the Arguments urged by the Adversaries of the Gospel, to shew, that the Prophecy in the Text is not primarily, or rather not at all applicable to Messiah, tho' they are applied by *St. Peter* to Jesus our Lord, under that Character. Having therefore already proved, that there is no Absurdity in such an Application, I now proceed to evince, that there is Reason and Justice in it.

The Persons before whom *St. Peter*, in the 3d Chap. of *Acts*, declared, that the Prophecy of *Moses* in the Text was fulfilled in

Christ Jesus, were *Jews*: Men that believed *Moses* to have been divinely inspired, and that whatever he delivered, by way of Prediction from God, would most undoubtedly come to pass. If therefore, from the giving forth of this Prophecy to the Days of St. *Peter*, no Prophet, except Jesus of *Nazareth*, was ever raised up, to whom the Description given of the Prophet foretold, so precisely agreed, as it did with him; St. *Peter* acted pertinently and rationally in applying it to Jesus: For this being once admitted, the *Jews*, his Auditors, were thereby reduced to this Dilemma: Either they must give up the Credit of *Moses*, as one who foretold things that never were fulfilled; or they must admit that he therein spake of Christ our Lord, whom therefore they were obliged to receive as a Person sent from God, unto whom, by *Moses's* express Command, they were bound to hearken.

Let us therefore examine the Character *Moses* gives of that Prophet, whom, according to the Prediction of the Text, God was to raise, and then we shall be able to judge whether any one, save Jesus, ever came up to it.

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The Lord thy God, says he, will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy Brethren, like unto me.

But did this ever happen throughout the entire Period of *Judaism*, if we except the Prophet of *Nazareth*? Did ever any but he equal *Moses* in the Circumstance of being Legislator, as well as Prophet? Or in Largeness, as well as Intimacy of divine Communications, and without the Medium of Dreams and Visions; or lastly, in the Number and Strangeness of the Miracles done by him? These are the Characters by which *Moses* stands distinguished among the *Jewish* Prophets. And was any, that succeeded, like unto *Moses*, in all, or any of these Respects, before the Coming of Christ? No surely. The Prophets that sealed the Canon of the Old Testament, and probably *Esdra*s at the Head of them in their Additions which close the Book of *Deuteronomy*, have acknowledged that none to their Days, soon after which Prophecy itself ceased, had come up to him in the abovenamed Particulars. *There arose not, say they, a Prophet since in Israel like*
unto

unto Moses, whom the Lord knew Face to Face : In all the Signs and Wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the Land of Egypt, to Pharoah, and to all his Servants, and to all his Land. And in all that mighty Hand, and in all the great Terror which Moses shewed in the Sight of all Israel.

Behold here a Comment of inspired Men upon *Moses's Words, a Prophet like unto me.* And can we, after such an Authority, doubt that he meant less than a Prophet equal to him in Degree and Manner of Inspiration, and in the Power of working Miracles ? Why then should we not proceed with our Inquiry, how the Words of the Prophecy have been fulfilled in their plain and established Acceptation ?

But here the Advocates for Infidelity put in their Exceptions, and, upon the Authority both of Christian and Jewish Expositors, deny an absolute Equality between *Moses* and the Prophet foretold in the Text, to be meant by the Words, *like unto me* ; but only a Similitude in certain Respects, as to their Birth, Calling, and Doctrine ; that

Moses

S E R M O N XI. 129

Moses therein does not speak of his Legislative, but his Prophetick Office; that the Word *like* denotes only a certain Agreement in Name and Authority, and not a perfect Equality, as appears from the last Words of the Book of *Deuteronomy* above cited, in which no mention is made of *Moses's* Legislative Character, nor any Comparison drawn between him and the Prophets, that succeeded, in any such Respect.

To this we might Answer, that an imperfect Enumeration of the Particulars, in respect of which the Men of the great Synagogue, at the End of *Deuteronomy*, affirm, *there arose not a Prophet since in Israel like unto Moses*; will not conclude against our supplying the Instances therein omitted. Nor will their Saying, that no Prophet had arisen to their Times like unto *Moses*, in certain Respects, prove those to be all that was intended under that Expression in the Prophecy of the Text. They might have Reasons, utterly unknow to us, for proceeding no further in the Comparison, even supposing them to have known that a future and new Legislator was to arise, who should improve upon
Moses's

Moses's Plan, altering it in some Respects, and enlarging the Extent of the whole. And if they were not clear in this Point, but believed that the Religion of *Moses* was to remain for ever, as it was settled by him; what Wonder is it that they should be silent in denying any Prophet like him to have arisen, in a Case that they supposed could never happen any more in *Israel*? Thus much, however, seems to be extorted from our Adversaries own Management of this Debate, that a Prophet like unto *Moses* was one who should equal him in the Degree of Inspiration; one whom the Lord should know *Face to Face*; and likewise one who should be like him in all the Signs and Wonders that he did in *Egypt*, and afterwards in the Sight of all *Israel*. Because it is but equitable that they who exclude Likeness unto *Moses*, in Point of Legislation, from being designed in the Text, merely because it is not mentioned in the Comparison drawn between *Moses* and the succeeding Prophets in the End of *Deuteronomy*, should admit those Particulars, which are expressly mentioned there, to be Instances in which the Prophet, that was to arise, should be like unto *Moses*.

Let

Let us therefore, for a while at least, drop *Moses's* grand Character, as a Legislator, and, considering him only as a Person favoured with extraordinary Methods of Inspiration and with Power of doing many and most wonderful Miracles, and that the Prophet, to be raised like unto him, was to equal him only in these Particulars ; has not the Event shewn, that no such Prophet ever arose, unless it be acknowledged that Jesus was the Person ? And, consequently, did not the Prophecy of the Text respect him, and him only ? In both these Regards he was like unto *Moses*, and even exceeded him. *Moses* truly conversed with God Face to Face, as a Man doth with his Friend : But Christ was in the Bosom of the Father, having all the Endearments and Familiarity of a Son. *Moses* did many and wonderful Miracles, by a divine Power afforded him as Occasion required : Whereas Christ performed more and greater Wonders, by a Power inherent in him, which he could and did exert as it pleased him. But could it be said that any Prophet, between the giving out of the Prophecy in the Text, and the Times of Christ, exceed-

ed, or even came up to *Moses* in any of these Particulars? Were ever any of them honoured with the Symbols of the divine Presence for 40 Days and 40 Nights successively, hearing God speak to them all that Time, Mouth to Mouth, as *Moses* was? Or which of them, like him, gave Deliverance, Food, and Clothing to a People, numerous as the Sand on the Sea-shore. for 40 Years together, by perpetual Miracle? Can the *Jews* pretend that the Lord their God has raised up unto them a Prophet thus distinguished, since the Days of *Moses*, if Jesus be disallowed for such. Till such a one then appeared, they were excusable for expecting him, of whom *Moses* spake; but when a Prophet came into the World, not only like unto *Moses*, but far exceeding him, what Apology will they offer for not hearkening unto him? These Things being considered, great Reason had our Lord to tell the unbelieving *Jews*, as he does, *John v. ver. 45.* that *Moses*, in whom they trusted, accused them for not believing him; and that had they believed *Moses*, they would have believed him; for that *Moses* wrote of him. Exceeding, or at least equalling any Prophet
that

that had gone before in miraculous Operations, was in our Saviour's Time a Note of Messias, even among the vulgar *Jews*. From whence proceeded that Saying of theirs concerning our Lord, *John vii. ver. 31. When Christ cometh, will he do more Miracles than these which this Man hath done?* Upon the Strength of this Argument the Evangelist tells us they believed on him. And doubtless their Conversion was founded on the Prophecy of the Text. There *Moses* commanded them to hearken, without Reserve, whenever the Lord their God should raise unto them a Prophet like unto him. But, in the Person of Jesus, they beheld one of this Sort, a Man in every Respect like unto the great Founder of their Religion, more especially in the Signs and Wonders done by him, which were so many and so great, that no one who should come after had Room to perform more, or more wonderful Ones. They deemed it therefore irrational to wait any longer for the fulfilling of a Prophecy, which, with their own Eyes, they had seen already compleated, and so believed Jesus to be the Christ.

If then this be the Case ; if a Prophet like unto *Moses*, in the Sense of my Text, was necessarily to equal him in high and immediate Degrees of Inspiration, and also in Number and Quality of Miracles ; if no other Prophet, at least for many Generations, arose like unto him, in either of these Respects ; for the Truth of which we have the Authority of Scripture in the End of *Deuteronomy* : Hence arises a fresh Argument against those Expositors, Jewish or Christian, who affirm, that *Moses*, in the Prophecy before us, foretold a Succession of Prophets, that was to commence immediately after his Death. We may safely leave these Men to dispute the Point with the inspired Author, or Authors of the Additions to the End of the *Pentateuch*, who expressly assert, not only that no such Succession of Prophets, like unto *Moses*, took place after his Death, but that not so much as a single Prophet arose afterwards, of whom it could be truly said he was like unto *Moses*. If they shall say, that *Moses*, by a Prophet to be raised like unto him, meant a general Likeness only, as in his Prophetick Character at large, and that
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the Passage in the End of *Deuteronomy* speaks of a particular and exprefs Likeness in the Instances there specified; this would prove a Suggestion without the least Reason or Foundation. For if *Moses*, or the Holy Spirit, that dictated this Prophecy, had intended to foretell only a Succession of ordinary Prophets, or a single one of that Kind, what possible Cause will they assign for the Insertion of these Words, *like unto me*. Such Words, if utterly without Meaning, were not only needless, but highly incommodious: They could only serve to perplex and confound Posterity in the Application of that Prophecy: And therefore, from the ordinary Perspicuity of Scripture Language, we may rest ourselves secure that the Words, *like unto me* had a Meaning, according to their obvious Acceptation; implying, that the Prophet, spoken of, should resemble *Moses* in some Qualities not common to ordinary Prophets. No one Fact was better known to the *Israelites* in those Days, than the Eminence of their Lawgiver, above all other inspired Persons of that Time. God himself had asserted it on a very remarkable Occasion; *viz.* when *Aaron and Miriam spake*

against Moses, on Account of his Marriage with an *Ethiopian Woman*, saying, *Hath the Lord spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?* They pretended at this Time therefore to be like unto *Moses*: But God soon convinced *Aaron* and *Miriam* of their Mistake, and of the difference there was between the ordinary Method of Inspiration, of which they partook, and that wherewith *Moses* was honoured. To imagine, therefore, after all this, that by a Prophet to be raised up *like unto Moses*, no more would be understood than one of the same Dignity and Rank with *Aaron* and *Miriam*; a Prophet like unto him, in the Circumstance of Inspiration at large, must be vain and unreasonable. We own that all true Prophets, or Prophets of God, were like unto *Moses*, in being divinely inspired; and therefore we insist upon it, that had the Prophecy intended no other, save this general Likeness, it had been sufficiently conveyed in the Promise of raising up unto them a Prophet: But the Prediction of a Prophet, like unto *Moses*, must mean one, who, like him, was more than a Prophet.

In a Word, a Promise to raise up a Prophet after *Moses*, was, without further Addition, sufficient for the Intention of the Prophecy, as explained, to mean no more than a Succession of ordinary Prophets: But the Promise of a Prophet to be raised up *like unto Moses*, whom God had openly proclaimed to be superior to all common Prophets, must be both intended and understood of an extraordinary Person, whose Intercourses with God should be equally intimate with those, which distinguished *Moses* from the inspired Ones of his own and the following Times. And as none of this Sort appeared till *Shilo*, *i. e.*, Christ came, there is the highest Probability, or perhaps rather an absolute Certainty, that of him, and him only, *Moses* spake in the Prophecy of the Text, and St. *Peter* is hereby sufficiently justified for applying it accordingly.

Hitherto then it appears, that dropping the Legislative Character of *Moses*, and considering him only as a Prophet, distinguished above all other by free and familiar Communications with the Deity, and an uncommon

198 S E R M O N XI.

Power of working almost perpetual Miracles ; even in these Respects no Prophet was raised up like him, till the Prophet of *Nazareth*, Jesus our Lord, who, by his Resemblance to him, fulfilled the Prediction of my Text, and thereby to the *Jews* unanswerably proved himself to be the Prophet foretold therein.

But to add Strength, if possible, to the Verification of this Prophecy in the Person of Jesus, let us now examine, whether a Prophet, like unto *Moses*, was not likewise to resemble him in the Quality of a Legislator under God to his People ; and consequently, whether, on this Account also, Christ our Lord be not the only Prophet, that has appeared in the Event to be like unto *Moses*.

Certain it is, that the Legislative Capacity of *Moses* was a grand Addition to his Prophetick One ; and therefore a Promise of a Prophet *like* unto him, which did not include that also, was not only short of what the Words obviously import, but was also incomparably less gracious. Does it not then seem rash and irreverent to conceive, that a
divine

divine Promise should contain less than the Terms, wherein it is expressed, naturally imply. We know that many Prophetick Grants, have really extended further than the Letter of them would warrant us to expect : But in that of the Text, if some Expositions are to be allowed, the very Reverse of this is the Case, and God, in his Dealings with a favourite People, promises them infinitely less than his Expressions amount to. The Singularity therefore of this Method of Proceeding, so far short of God's usual Bounty and Goodness, was there no other Reason, should incline every Man of common Piety to reject an Interpretation, that does Violence to the Letter of a divine Promise, in order to make it less gracious than it naturally is, or seems to be. And nothing at any Time can justify such Kind of Exposition, but when the literal Sense of the Promise, or Prophecy, would make it contradict some other plain Declaration of God's Will in Scripture, or would run counter to his moral Perfections ; which is far from being the Case here. So that had there been nothing in the Context, or Occasion of the Words before us, which would incline us to believe that Legislation was one

Point of Likeness foretold of the Prophet, whom the Lord their God would raise unto the *Israelites*, out of their own Countrymen, like unto *Moses*; yet the general Terms in which the Prophecy is couched, would persuade reasonable Men, that Resemblance, in so material and advantageous an Instance, was not excepted, especially till better Reasons for such Exception shall appear, than have hitherto been offered.

But really the first Occasion of this Prophecy seems also to direct us, in judging of the Likeness between *Moses* and the Prophet therein foretold, to insist on Legislation as necessarily making Part of it. For *Moses* himself assures the *Israelites*, that this Promise or Prophecy was not then first given, but soon after the Publishing of the Law in *Horeb*, according to the Desire of *Israel*, when he said, *Let me not hear again the Voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great Fire any more, that I die not.* Then was it, and on that Occasion, that the Lord said unto *Moses*, *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren, like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth,*
and

and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my Words, which he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him. The People amazed at the Terrors of the Lord, with which he gave out the Law, had said unto *Moses* : *Speak thou with us, and we will hear : But let not God speak with us, lest we die.* This Expedient of theirs God approved of, thereby consenting that it should thenceforward be as they desired, that *Moses* should be the Mouth of the Lord, to deliver from him all his future Statutes and Ordinances unto his People. But *Moses* could not abide here forever, to be the Medium and Canal of Legislation between God and his Church. And therefore God was pleased further to declare, that as the unpromulged Part of the Law he was then giving should be delivered by *Moses* : So whenever he should think fit to make any Alteration therein, he would use a human Mediator therein, a Prophet like unto *Moses*, who should, as he was to do for the future, first receive commands from God, and afterwards impart them to his People. Here you have the true and plain Connection between
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262 S E R M O N XI.

the Prophecy of the Text, at its first Delivery, and the Occasion of it. And we find it was prior to any Law against Necromancers, or any the least Mention of them; that it was given to *Moses* immediately on his being constituted the standing Legislator of the *Jews* next under God. A Prophet therefore predicted to arise *like* unto him, at such a Time, and in such a Light, must be a Legislator also, such a one as, in Fact, never did arise till the Christian Lawgiver came, who alone is able to save and to destroy.

It is urged, by the great Enemy to literal Prophecies in the Old Testament relating to Messiah, that, granting the Promise of a Prophet was given at Mount *Horeb*, at the Request of the *Jews*, who, terrified at the Voice of God from Mount *Horeb*, desired God would speak unto them, in Times to come, by the Mediation of *Moses*, and before the Law against Wizards was enacted; yet it will not follow, but that the Promise of a Prophet might be a Reason, in the Place before us, of the preceding Prohibition or Law against Wizards. For tho' God promised the *Jews* at *Horeb*, according to their Request, a Prophet who
should

should not terrify them; and that, without mentioning, or having any Regard to a Prophet, who was to supply the Place of Wizards, &c. among them; yet what hinders but that the same Promise might afterwards be urged, as a Reason also of a Law against going to Wizards?

To all which our Answer is, that the Promise of a Prophet, given at *Horeb*, could not afterwards be urged as a Reason of a Law against going to Wizards; because the Prophet, then and there promised, was such a one, as could not supply the Place of Wizards, in which Circumstance the Objector makes the Reason of that Law to consist. For the *Jews* at Mount *Horeb* had no Apprehension that God would, in the same terrible Majesty that accompanied the giving out of the Ten Commandments, deliver all future Responses to them; nor consequently did they desire that God should not speak himself on such Occasions. They had abundant Reason to suppose, that as God had given all occasional Directions to them by the Hands of *Moses* in Time past; so he, and after him others in his Stead, would, from Time to Time, convey

convey all ordinary Responses from God their Sovereign. But as he had taken a different Method in publishing standing Rules for the moral Conduct of the *Israelites*, with his own tremendous Voice : So they feared that the Remainder of his Laws would be promulged with equal Circumstances of Terror, and therefore desired that, on every such Occasion, what God had to say to them might be delivered by a Mediator, and that for the present *Moses* might be the Person. But a Succession of Legislative Prophets was utterly wild and chimerical. It must suppose, that God would in every Generation devise new Laws for the religious and political Uses of the *Jews*, than which what can well be more improbable, if not absurd ? And yet, without a Succession of such Prophets, the Promise made at *Horeb* could not possibly be the Reason of a Law against going to Wizards. How could the Prediction of a Prophet, vested like *Moses* with Legislative Privileges, who could scarce be wanted in many Ages, be urged to the *Jews*, as a Supply for Wizards and Diviners, who were applied to not only every Age, but even every Day ? The great Difficulty therefore will still return upon our Adversaries,

and

and they will effect nothing at all, till they shall prove that the Prophet desired and promised at *Horeb* was not a legislative, but an ordinary Prophet. For if the first Sort only was spoken of at the giving out of the Prophecy under present Consideration, such a one could alone be meant in the Repetition of it: And there it could not possibly be urged as a Reason of the preceding Prohibition, or Law against Wizards.

And now upon the whole, these three Things appear: *First*, That by the Prophet in the Text, whom the Lord their God would raise up unto the *Jews*, could not be meant a Succession of ordinary Prophets; and consequently that Jesus, according to the Application of it made by St. *Peter*, might be the only Person therein foretold. *Secondly*, That the Prediction in the Text neither is, nor could be urged, as a Reason against the preceding Prohibition, or Law against Wizards; for which Cause that Supposition is not on any such Account incredible, or even improbable. *Thirdly*, That in the plain and obvious Sense of the Text, no Prophet ever did arise like unto *Moses* throughout the whole

whole *Jewish* Oeconomy, except Jesus the Founder of the Christian Religion. Either, therefore, he, and he only, was meant thereby, or else the Prophecy had no Meaning. But the latter Branch of this Alternative no real *Jew* could ever admit of: The former then is to them undeniably made good, and St. Peter, who applied the Prophecy of the Text to our Saviour, is thereby fully justified from having impertinently alledged the Passage from the Old Testament, as a virtual Proof of Jesus's Messiahship to the *Jews*. The Event has shewn the true Designation of *Moses's* Words; and whether before the Coming of Christ the *Jews* understood them of Messiah, or not, since that Time no one, who believes *Moses's* prophetick Character, can doubt but that in him they had their utmost Completion. He was truly like unto *Moses* in every Circumstance that distinguished that famous Legislator from all ordinary Prophets: God put his Words into his Mouth, making a new Covenant with Mankind by his Mediation, as he did with the *Jews* by *Moses*: Like him too Jesus was faithful in all God's House, not being confined to one or two Ministrations only, but
 having

S E R M O N XI. 297

having the Direction of the whole Household of Faith, as King, Priest, and Prophet. Again, in the Signs and Wonders wrought by our Lord in Person, whilst upon Earth, he resembles the *Jewish* Legislator. And Lastly, The Punishment that attended Disobedience to the Words of *Moses*, has been more than equalled in what has befallen such as hearkened not unto the Words which our great Prophet spake in the Name of God: He has required it of the whole *Jewish* Nation, and yet does require it. Let all therefore take Warning by the Calamities, that have overtaken that once favourite People of God on Account of their Unbelief: For if God spared not the natural Branches, much less will he spare us who are Grafts in their Stead, if we, like them, refuse to hearken unto the Will of God, as declared by Jesus Christ: To whom in Unity with the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now and ever. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XII.

MALACHI iv. 5th and 6th Verses.

Behold I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the great and dreadful Day of the Lord; and he shall turn the Hearts of the Fathers to the Children, and the Hearts of the Children to the Fathers, lest I come and smite the Earth with a Curse.

THE same Person, here spoken of under the Name of *Elijah* the Prophet, had been beforementioned by *Malachi*, under the Character of the Lord's Messenger, who was to prepare the Way before him. *Malachi* iii. 1. And that by this Person was meant, not the real *Elijah*, but another, that resembled

VOL. I. P him

210 S E R M O N XII.

him in many Qualities, even *John* the Baptist, and the Forerunner of *Jesus Christ*, is a Point incumbent on the Advocates for the Gospel to make good : For that this was really the Case, was asserted by our Lord himself more than once. Thus for Instance ; when the Disciples asked him, *Why say the Scribes that Elias must first come* ; *Jesus* admitted it to be true in a certain Sense, *that Elias was first to come and restore all Things* : But then he adds, *that Elias is come already, and they, i. e. the Jews, knew him not, or did not own him for the Elias forespoken of*. And lest any Doubt should remain, whom our Lord meant by the *Elias* that was come already, *St. Matthew* adds, *That the Disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist*. *Matt. xvii. Verses 10, 11, 12, 13*. Again, the same Evangelist introduces our Lord, saying, *That all the Law and the Prophets prophesied until John*. To which he immediately adds, *and if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was to come*. Now it was not foretold by any of the Prophets, that *Elias* should come, save
by

S E R M O N XII. 211

by *Malachi*, in the Text : So that our Lord, by the Saying last mentioned, has plainly asserted, upon his own Veracity, that *Elijah* the Prophet, whose Mission is foretold in the Text, was not the real Person so named, but that thereby was presignified *John* the Baptist, and the Forerunner of Christ. On this Account the Friends of Christianity are obliged to shew, that there is nothing weak or absurd in this Interpretation. But further than this, they are not concerned in the Thing : For our Saviour and the Evangelists build nothing upon the Completion of this Prophecy ; they make it no Proof or Foundation of the Christian Religion, only affirm it, as they do other preternatural Truths. For which Reason, if there be nothing in the Prediction itself, that is repugnant to the Appropriation made of it by our Saviour, if there be no Inconsistency in making *Elijah* the Prophet to denote *John* the Baptist ; so far all is safe, and no Objection will lye against the Gospel on this Account.

But here the celebrated Writer against literal Prophecies interposes several Suggestions, by which he proposes to cut off all Pretence for saying, that *John* the Baptist is literally foretold in the Text.

And first he says, that the literal Interpretation of *Malachi* is, that *Elias*, the real *Elias*, was to come, and that it is no literal Interpretation to make *Elias* signify not *Elias*, but somebody who resembled him in Qualities, for which the Prophet himself gives not the least Colour or Ground.

Now in Answer to this, it might be sufficient to say, that the Reputation of Jesus, who affirms, that *John* the Baptist was the *Elias* which was to come, is no Way concerned in the Question, whether the Prophecy before us was literally or allegorically fulfilled in the Baptist. So long as it was at all fulfilled in him, the Veracity of our Lord is safe, who does not specify, whether his Forerunner was literally

S E R M O N XII. 213

rally or allegorically the *Elias* of *Malachi*. Besides, this Objector knows, that all this is only playing upon Words; I say, he knows it, having given it under his own Hand, that the literal Sense in this Controversy signifies the primary Sense, in Opposition to a typical, allegorical, or secondary: Which literal Sense may be signified as well, and as obviously by a Figurative, as by the most simple and literal Expression. And by Consequence, if by *Elijah* the Prophet *John* Baptist was primarily intended, that must be the literal Sense, how figurative soever the Expression may be. These, *mutatis mutandis*, are the Writer's own Words on another like Occasion, and therefore we may leave him to answer his Difficulty himself.

As for what he adds, that the Prophet *Malachi* gives no Colour or Ground for understanding him of a different Person from the real *Elias*, it is foreign to the Purpose, nor is it altogether true. First, this Suggestion is foreign to the Purpose; for no Prophet is supposed to speak his own

214 S E R M O N XII.

Sense, nor always and necessarily to understand the Meaning of the Prediction delivered by him, but is often a mere Canal, thro' which the Holy Ghost conveys the Discovery of distant future Events, which were not intended to be explained but by the Events themselves: And of this Kind is the Prediction before us. How then could it be expected, that the Prophet should give Ground or Colour for a Meaning, of which he himself was not conscious? But if the Objector's Sense be, that the Words, as spoken by the Prophet, give no Ground for understanding them otherwise than obviously, it is a rash Suggestion, if not a false one: If, indeed, at the Time when *Malachi* prophesied these Things, *Elijah* the Prophet had been upon Earth, the sending of him would have carried a plain and obvious Appearance, without any Thing that was occult or mysterious. But *Elijah* the Prophet had then been many Ages translated into Heaven; and therefore the Promise of sending him, without Mention of his Descent from those Regions of Glory, was enough to raise a Doubt, whether

S E R M O N XII. 215

ther the real *Elias* was there meant, and not rather some other Person, whose Qualities were best represented under that borrowed Name. How it happened, that the antient *Jewish* Interpreters entertained no Scruples like these on the Words of *Malachi*, I know not : But most certain it is, that on similar Occasions they were wont to suppose a mystical Meaning of proper Names in their Prophets. Thus, for Instance, when God, by his Prophet *Jeremy*, foretels to the *Jews*, that they should hereafter serve the Lord their God, and *David* their King, whom he would raise up unto them; and when the same Promise is repeated nearly in the same Words by *Hosea*; the *Jews* did not expect, in virtue of these Prophecies, that the real *David* would be raised up and resume his Throne, but another Person, of whom *David* was a Type and a Progenitor, viz. Christ the Son of *David*. They thought it unlikely, that God would fetch back his servant *David* from the Grave to rule over *Israel*, after he had been so many hundred Years at rest; and therefore conclud-

216 S E R M O N XII.

ded it to be no real, but a myſtical Appel-
 lation. By a Parity of Reaſon therefore,
 there was a ſufficient Ground and Colour,
 notwithstanding the poſitive Aſſertion of
 our Adverſary to the contrary, for making
 the *Elias* of *Malachi*, not the real *Elias*,
 who was then in Heaven, but ſome other,
 who reſembled him in certain Qualities.
 And as *John* the Baptiſt came in the Spi-
 rit and Power of *Elias*, like him in his
 Eremitical Abode, like him in the Heroick
 Freedom of rebuking Vice in the greateſt
 Perſonages, and in the Perſecutions he un-
 derwent from the Rage of Females in Pow-
 er, no myſtical Name could fit him better
 in the Language of a Prophet, than that
 of *Elijah*.

A 2d Objection againſt the Aſſertion of
 Jeſus, that *John* Baptiſt was the *Elias* of
Malachi, is, that the *Septuagint* Transla-
 tors, who were *Jews*, render, inſtead of
Elias the Prophet, expreſſly *Elias the Tiſb-*
bite; intimating to us, that thoſe Interpre-
 ters underſtood him to be the real *Elias*,
 from that Rendering of theirs. But here,
 1ſt,

S E R M O N X I I . 217

ist, The Fact on which this Objection rests, is not over certain. Perhaps the LXX originally translated it Ελίαν ὁ Προφητην, and the latter of these Words, thro' the Error of a Transcriber, might early be altered into Θεοβίττω. Certain it is, that more unlikely Alterations than this have happened from the Cause above assigned; and that the first Edition of the *Septuagint*, the Complutenian now reads it Ελίαν ὁ Προφήτης, as the *Hebrew* Text has it.

Again, supposing the Fact of the ancient *Greek* Rendering, to be ever so well established, I cannot see how it follows, from their rendering *Elias the Tishbite*, that they understood *Malachi* to speak of the real *Elias*, any more than if they had more closely followed the *Hebrew* in their Version, and called him *Elias the Prophet*. For *Elias the Tishbite* was not more distinctive of the real *Elias*, than *Elias the Prophet* was; there being only one of either Denomination mentioned in the Old Testament.

A third

A third Objection against *John Baptist* being the mystical *Elijah*, is raised from his own saying to the *Jews* of *Jerusalem*, set down in Chap. i. of St. *John's* Gospel. When they asked him, *whether he was Elias*, he denied himself to be *Elias*; and when asked, *who he was*, he said, *he was the Voice of one crying in the Wilderiness*, &c. which is a Passage taken from *Isaiab*. Hereby he not only denies himself to be *Elias*, but may justly be deemed to deny himself to be the *Elias* in *Malachi*, to whom most probably the Question and Answer referred, by turning the Question from *Malachi* to *Isaiab*, saying, in Effect, “ I am not the Person prophesied of in “ *Malachi*, but the Person prophesied of “ in *Isaiab*”.

To which I reply, that however exact the Baptist's Knowledge of himself was, it cannot be supposed greater than the Knowledge of his Lord, to whom he himself gives the Preference in all Respects. But admitting that the Objection has rightly

S E R M O N XII. 219

ly stated the Purport of what the *Baptist* says of himself, he and his Lord give very different and contradictory Accounts of the Matter in question. For *John*, according to the Objector, denies himself to be the *Elias*, of whose coming *Malachi* prophesied; and Jesus his Lord affirms, *that he was the very Elias who was to come*. Which then of these are we to credit, supposing them to be in different Stories? Certainly the Lord Jesus, of whom the Baptist himself in general declares, *that whosoever believeth on him hath everlasting Life, and that he who believeth him not, hath not Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him*. We might therefore allow the Matter of this third Objection to be true, and yet deny its Pertinence, because the Declaration there insisted on, is contradicted by a Testimony that is confessedly superior. But after all, we have need of the clearest Proof, before we admit a Thing in itself so improbable, as that *John Baptist* and our Saviour should be diametrically opposite to each other in their Declarations concerning the *Elias* of *Malachi*. It

220 S E R M O N XII.

is unquestionable, that Jesus makes the *Baptist* to be the *Elias* of *Malachi*, his Words not being capable of any other Meaning: But that *John Baptist* denies himself to be that Person, is evidently not so plain, because the Objector is constrained to labour the Proof of that Point, before he can bring it to any tolerable Conclusion; and after all the Pains he has taken, dares pronounce nothing more favourable of his Side of the Question, than that *John the Baptist* may justly be deemed to deny himself to be the *Elias* in *Malachi*, and that he says, *in effect*, he is not that Person: And yet in saying thus much only, he says a great deal more than is true or probable. The *Jews* of *Jerusalem* ask the *Baptist* whether he was *Elias*, whom they expected in Person, before the coming of *Messias*; and he answered, I am not: So that *Malachi* being no way essential, either to the Question or the Answer, was probably not at all in the Thoughts either of the Querist or of the Respondent. They ask concerning the real *Elias*, and *John* answers according to the Intention
of

S E R M O N XII. 221

of the Question, that he was not the Person: But in so doing, he is far from denying, that he was the mystical *Elias*, or the *Elias* prophesied of in *Malachi*. To suppose the contrary, as the Objector does, is to suppose that the *Baptist* answered more than he was asked, which is improbable. He takes it for granted, that both the Question and Answer most probably referred to *Elias* in *Malachi*; whereby he asserts a direct Falshood, if he means any more, than that a Person of that Name in *Malachi* gave Occasion to the Question, and consequently to the Answer likewise. Suppose, then, that the Reference to *Malachi* had made Part of the Question, and that the *Jews* had interrogated *John* in the Form following; art thou the very *Elias* come again upon Earth, whom we expect pursuant to *Malachi's* Prediction: Could the *Baptist* have answered otherwise than he now does, in the Negative? Nay, had the *Jews* put the Question shorter, thus, Art thou the *Elias* of *Malachi*; *John* could not answer them pertinently, and according to the Terms of the Question, as they meant it, otherwise than

than by a Negative. The tacit Reference therefore to the *Elias* in *Malachi*, on which the Objector lays so great Strefs, would be of no Use to his Argument, should we admit it: But he thinks the *Baptist* denied himself in every Sense to be the *Elias* of *Malachi*, by turning the Question from *Malachi* to *Isaiab*; and thinks this was saying in Effect, *I am not the Person prophesied of in Malachi, but the Person prophesied of in Isaiab*. But with what Colour of Likelihood does he say, that *John* turned the Question, who plainly was not the Querist, but the Respondent. The Truth of the Matter, and the whole Truth is, that *John* chose rather to answer, who he was from the Prophecy in *Isaiab*, than from that of *Malachi*: Not that different Persons were spoken of by these Prophets, but because the *Jews* were invincibly prejudiced with regard to the Prediction of *Malachi*; and putting a Question according to their own mistaken Sentiments, he could not directly answer them, but by denying he was the *Elias*, of whom they erroneously thought *Malachi* prophesied. Where-

S E R M O N XII. 223

as the Prophecy concerning the Harbinger of Christ in *Isaiab*, was not liable to this Inconvenience; and therefore it was, he chose from thence to tell them who he was, rather than from the other in *Malachi*; tho' both were applicable to him, and to him only.

The fourth and last Objection against *John Baptist's* being the *Elias* in *Malachi*, is, that his Character and Conduct do not agree to the Character given of *Elias* in *Malachi*. For first, he did not preceed such a dreadful Day, as is described in *Malachi*, wherein God would punish the Disobedient to the Law of *Moses*, and make the obedient prosper. Now, that *Elijah* the Prophet was to be sent before the great and dreadful Day of the Lord, we read in the first Verse of the Text; but read not there, that God would then punish the Disobedient to the Law of *Moses*, and make the Obedient prosper. This is the Objector's Addition, and being conscious that it was so, he makes no Reference to Chapter or Verse, where we are to find it.

224 S E R M O N XII.

But supposing *Malachi* had after this very Manner described the great and dreadful Day of the Lord, was not all this verified in the Destruction of *Jerusalem* and its Inhabitants? The meritorious Cause whereof, among other Things, was their neglect of *Moses* and the Prophets, whilst the obedient Christians, by a divine Warning, as we are credibly informed, retired from that City, and so were preserved. And did not *John the Baptist* precede that Day, and also prophesy of it under the Expression of the Wrath to come, and of the Day when the Ax should be laid unto the Root of the Tree, and Christ should thoroughly purge his Floor?

A second Disagreement in Character between the *Elias* in *Malachi* and *John the Baptist*, according to the Objector, is, that the latter did not, as was predicted of the *Elias* in *Malachi*, *turn the Hearts of the Fathers unto the Children, and the Hearts of the Children to the Fathers.*

But

But this is what he barely affirms, not having thought fit to assign the Meaning of this Part of the Prophecy, or particularly to explain wherein the Disagreement consists. Now the most probable Sense of the Passage is, that when *Elias* cometh, he shall work a considerable Reformation in the Morals of that Age, and shall have a great Resort to him for Instruction, which will be attended with proportionable Effect. But was not this verified in *John the Baptist*? Did he not preach Repentance and Confession of Sins, previously to the Baptism administered by him? Do we not read of the vast Success that attended his Ministry: How *Jerusalem*, and all *Judea*, and all the Regions round about *Jordan*, went out unto him, and were baptized of him, confessing their Sins: How the most profligate of all Professions, the Publicans and Soldiers, attended on his Preaching, and required his Instructions for their particular Conduct in their respective Callings: How Men at the greatest Distance of Opinion from each other, the *Pharisees* and

VOL. I. Q the

226 S E R M O N XII.

the *Sadducees* agreed to be his Converts, to the Amazement of the *Baptist* himself, who thereon asked, *who had warned them to flee from the Wrath to come: Even Herod himself heard him gladly and feared, i. e. revered him, and observed or protected him, and when he heard him, he did many Things, i. e. he was influenced by his Preaching to perform many good Deeds.* And was not all this sufficient to answer the Character of *Elias* in *Malachi*, who was to turn Men's Hearts of all Ages and Distinctions? But supposing this not quite full enough to answer the strong Expressions in *Malachi*, of turning the Hearts of the Fathers unto the Children, and the Hearts of the Children to the Fathers: For which Opinion, I profess I see no just Cause; yet it may be well reconciled, by the Observation of a learned Prelate among us, that in Scripture he is said to do a Thing; who doth every Thing proper to cause it, tho' the Effect doth not answer. The Objector indeed carps at this Remark, as applied to the present Case, saying, that it cannot be a literal Interpretation of a
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S E R M O N XII. 227

Prophecy, which says, *Elias* shall do so or so, to explain it, by his only doing what is proper to cause the Effect, tho' it miscarries in the Event. I might here answer him as I did above, by his own Definition of a literal Prophecy, *i. e.* that it was such a one as might be signified as well, and as obviously, by a figurative, as by the most simple or literal, Expression: So that the Interpretation of the Prophecy, tho' explained by a figurative Form of Speech, may, nevertheless, be literal, contrary to what this Writer pretends. But I further affirm, that it is an utter Mistake to call this a figurative Interpretation; and that what this Writer ignorantly supposes to be a Figure, is no more than an Idiom of the Scripture Language, between which two Things there is a very wide Difference: For Figures are common to all Languages, whilst Idioms are Modes of Speaking peculiar to each distinct one.

And thus I have answered all the little Cavils, or rather Impertinencies, by

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which

228 S E R M O N XII.

which this celebrated Patron for Infidelity endeavours to destroy the Application of *Malachi's* Prophecy in the Text to *John the Baptist*. If stronger Reasons had been producible, he wanted neither Sagacity to have found him out, nor Malice to prompt them to a Publication of them. Indeed, he had too much Sense to be imposed on by his own low Sophistry; and in better Times would have been ashamed of so poor an Attempt upon the common Understanding of Mankind. But an Age, like the present, over-run with Libertin Principles and Practices, however otherwise enlightened, does as readily take up with weak Arguments for irreligious Systems, as ever darker Times did with those for Bigotry and Superstition: For Infidels, in certain favourite Points, are the most resigned and implicit Believers; who, whilst they are perpetually calling upon us to examine the Grounds of our own Faith, themselves are contented to take, upon Trust, every Argument for their own Side of the Question. To conclude their Character, and withall the present

Discourse

S E R M O N XII. 229

Discourse, in the Words of this their Advocate, differently applied, and in Part altered. “ There is no Folly so great, no
“ Absurdity so monstrous, and no Non-
“ sense so excessive, provided it be levelled
“ at Christianity, but what the common
“ Herd of Infidels are capable of believ-
“ ing, or at least of saying they believe.

S E R M O N XIII.

DANIEL ix. 24, 25, 26, 27.

24 *Seventy Weeks are determined upon thy People, and upon thy holy City, to finish the Transgression, and to make an End of Sins, and to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to seal up the Vision and Prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.* 25 *Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the Commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven Weeks; and threescore and two Weeks the Street shall be built again, and the Wall, even in trou-*

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blous Times. 26 And after threescore and two Weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: And the People of the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the City and the Sanctuary, and the End thereof shall be with a Flood, and unto the End of the War Desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the Covenant with many for one Week: And in the midst of the Week he shall cause the Sacrifice and the Oblation to cease: And for the overspreading of Abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the Consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the Desolate.

THE latter Part of this famous Prophecy is plainly applied by our Lord to the Destruction of Jerusalem, of which he makes it a Sign that the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel

S E R M O N XIII. 233

Daniel the Prophet, should be seen to stand in the Holy Place. No Doubt therefore can be made but that he understood the preceding Expressions of Messiah the Prince, and Messiah that was to be cut off, as spoken of himself. And consequently this Prediction is to be considered as a Prophecy from the Old Testament, applied to Christ in the New : And as such it belongs to the Enquiry I am at present upon, *viz.* whether it be impertinently alledged for that Purpose, as is pretended by the Adversaries to the Christian Religion.

The Cry against other Predictions of this Kind has been, that they are conceived in general and indefinite Terms, or else that their Agreement, with the Events of our Lord's Life, Death, and Resurrection, is merely casual : Whereas, in the Prophecy before us, a Person is foretold under the express Name of Messiah the Prince : His Death likewise, and those very Events which followed the Death of Jesus, such as the Destruction of *Jerusalem* by *Titus*, are plainly predicted. Nay, to compleat the

Character

234 S E R M O N XIII.

Character of *Daniel's* Prophecy, in Point of Speciality or Preciseness, a Time is therein fixed, within which the principal Incidents of it were to be compleated. On all which Accounts it has been thought of the highest Consequence by the Friends of Christianity, and has undergone the utmost Severity of Examination from its Enemies.

Porphyry, than whom none ever attacked the Gospel with more Learning and Acuteness, was so sensible of the Clearness of this and other Prophecies in *Daniel*, as to make it an Argument that they were written after the Facts predicted, and to this same expedient Recourse is had by a late celebrated Writer, who not content with an Attempt to prove that the Prophecy under Consideration relates to another Event, and not to Jesus, has endeavoured likewise to destroy the true Antiquity and Genuineness of *Daniel's* Writings, not allowing them to be older than the Times of *Antiochus Epiphanes*.

But

But the Arguments, on which this Adversary of ours builds his Charge of Spuriousness against the Book of *Daniel*, are remarkable only for being a Mixture of Falshood and Impertinence ; and it will always be a sufficient Refutation of such Pretensions, that considering the Zeal of the *Jews* after the Captivity for their Scriptures, and for the Reputation of their inspired Writers, it was morally impossible to obtrude a supposititious Prophecy upon them. The Novelty of such a Piece must always have been an invincible Objection against it : And a pretended prophetick Writing, not appearing amongst them till 3 or 400 Years after the Death of its supposed Author, must of Course have passed for a Forgery. Whereas it does not appear that the Book of *Daniel* was ever doubted of among the *Jews*, who were chiefly concerned about its Genuineness. On the other Hand, *Josephus* their Historian, who lived but two or three Centuries after the supposed Forgery of *Daniel*, admits it for Genuine and Canonical, and supposes
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236 S E R M O N XIII.

the *Jewish* Church always to have been in Possession of it, from the Times of its supposed Author. In short, for a Writer at this Time of Day to call in Question a Book written above 2000 Years ago, and, for aught that appears, constantly admitted for genuine, and inspired by an entire Nation, that were chiefly interested therein, is an Attempt so hopeless, as well as immodest, that nothing but the utmost Distress can account for the Undertaking. So rash a Procedure is enough to convince us, that this Writer had no great Dependence on the Validity of those internal Proofs, by which he attempts to explain this illustrious Prophecy of another Event, or of those by which he undertakes to shew, that it does not correspond with the Event of Jesus Christ.

[The first of which is, that the Prophecy of the Text relateth to another Event; which in short is this. He supposes the 70 Weeks to commence from the Prophecy of *Jeremiah* concerning the Return from Captivity, and the Rebuilding of *Jerusalem*. From thence to the first Year of
Cyrus

S E R M O N XIII. 237

Cyrus is 7 Weeks or 49 Years. It is true the Term of their Captivity was set at seventy Years by *Jeremy*; but *Daniel* says these 70 Weeks or Years were shortned or abbreviated, *i. e.* were reduced to 49 Years, or 7 Weeks; and add to these 63 Weeks, or 441 Years, and brings us down to the Time in which *Judas Maccabæus* cleansed the Temple, and restored the *Jewish* Worship: And thus the Term of 70 Weeks he thinks is fairly accounted for. As for the Particulars of the Prophecy, he explains Messiah the Prince, tho' spoken of singularly, of two Messias's; the first of which was *Cyrus*, who was to come at the End of 7 Weeks, and the other Messias Prince was *Judas Maccabæus*, who was to come in 62 Weeks, or 434 Years after the former.]

To refute therefore the latter of these Pretences, and to shew that, in spite of all his Cavils, the Prediction of the 70 Weeks in *Daniel* may, with great Appearance of Probability, be applied to Jesus, is our principal Business. For admitting that he has proved it to relate to an earlier Event, to wit, the Election of *Judas Maccabæus*

238 S E R M O N XIII.

to be High Priest, and the Establishment of the *Jewish* Worship under him, and the Murder of *Onias* the High Priest, and the Havock made by *Antiochus Epiphanes* : I say, admitting all this to be right, it will not follow that the Prophecy could not also Regard another and later Incident, *viz.* the Coming of Christ, his Death, and the Destruction of *Jerusalem* by *Titus*. All the Advocates for Christianity, one or two only excepted, allow of, and even suppose many Prophecies concerning Christ to have been remotely and secondarily fulfilled in him ; and therefore it will do no hurt to Christianity, if it should appear that this of *Daniel* was one of that Sort.

Let us, therefore, first inquire, how this famous Prediction is accommodated by Christians, and afterwards answer the Cavils made by Unbelievers against such Accommodation.

The Prophecy then begins thus : *Seventy Weeks are determined upon thy People, and upon thy holy City, to finish the Transgression, and to make an End of Sins, and*
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S E R M O N XIII. 239

to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to seal up the Vision and Prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

All this, say the Friends of Christianity, was exactly verified within seventy Weeks of Years, from a certain Epöcha, fixed by the Angel who delivered these Words to *Daniel*, in those which next follow. For before the Determination of that Period, Jesus Christ, by his Sufferings and Death, finished the Transgression, made an End of Sin, and made Reconciliation for Iniquity, by the All-sufficient Sacrifice of himself upon the Cross: By his Preaching also he had before this brought in everlasting Righteousness, *i. e.* a Rule of holy Living, not temporary like a great Part of the *Jewish* Religion, but such a one as should, in the whole of it, continue in Force unto the End of all Things. The same Jesus did likewise seal up the Vision and Prophecy, *i. e.* in him, and the Things relating to him were fulfilled, most of the Events typified under the Law and *Jewish* History, and foretold either by Visions or

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express

240 S E R M O N XIII.

express Predictions under the Prophets. *Lastly*, The most Holy was then anointed: God anointed Jesus of *Nazareth* with the Holy Ghost, and with Power to be a Prince and Saviour of his People.

But *Gabriel* proceeds. *Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the Commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven Weeks; and threescore and two Weeks the Street shall be built again, and the Wall, even in troublous Times.*

The Event corresponding to this in the History of Jesus is this. Reckoning from the first Royal Edict or Command for building *Jerusalem*, pursuant to which it was built with the Wall, tho' in the Midst of Trouble and Interruption: Reckoning, I say, from the Edict given out for that Purpose 69 Weeks, or 483 Years, it brings us down to the Time of Christ. Preciseness of Computation in this Case is scarce possible: For the exact Time of our Saviour's Birth is not yet settled among the
 Learned:

S E R M O N XIII. 241

Learned: And the Years of the *Persian* Reigns is another Difficulty attending the present Calculation, that being a Point of Chronology not perfectly adjusted. But which way soever we take, the Difference is not considerable enough to affect the Relation of this Prophecy to the Birth and Coming of Christ; the Difference not amounting to more than 20, or at the utmost 30 Years: Whereas the Rival Messiahs for this Prediction, *viz. Judas Maccabæus* and *Titus Vespasian*, are either an Age and a half too soon, or the greatest Part of an Age too late for the Time fixed by *Daniel*. So that on the whole, the Birth of Christ being the only Event similar to what is foretold by *Gabriel* in the Text, that falls within the Compass of Time therein prefixed, or that comes reasonably near to it, must have been thereby intended.

Let us now attend to what follows in the 3d ver. of the Text. *And after three-score and two Weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: And the People of*

VOL. I.

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242 S E R M O N XIII.

the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the City and the Sanctuary, and End the thereof shall be with a Flood, and unto the End of the War Desolations are determined.

These Predictions were plainly and exactly verified in Christ, and in the Times that followed him. *After the seven Weeks and threescore and two Weeks* he was cut off, not for himself, not for any Sins he had committed, but for the Sins of the World which he took away, or bare in his own Body. And within one Generation after came a Prince, whose People destroyed the City of *Jerusalem* and the Sanctuary. And here we may observe the Punctuality with which this Prophecy was fulfilled. It is not said that the Prince who was to come should destroy the City and the Sanctuary, but that the People of that Prince should do this. And accordingly the Destruction of the Temple was effected by the *Roman* Army, in spite of *Titus's* Endeavours to save it. Whether the Splendor of that stupendous Building, or a dread of the Deity, to whom it was sacred, were the Motives; certain

S E R M O N XIII. 243

certain it is, that the General used his repeated and utmost Efforts to restrain the Rage of his Soldiers, and to hinder them from setting Fire to the Sanctuary. But all was in vain. The over-ruling Providence of God verified the Prediction of *Gabriel*, his Angel, and his own wise Purposes, hindering the *Roman Army* from obeying the Orders of a General, whom perhaps they had not disobeyed in any other Instance.

The Remainder of the Prophecy in the rest of the Text is as follows. *And he shall confirm the Covenant with many for one Week : And in the Midst of the Week he shall cause the Sacrifice and the Oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of Abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the Consummation, and that determined shall be poured on the Desolate.*

The exact Meaning of all these Words it is difficult to determine, but the Event of Things has explained some of them. Such is the absolute Cessation of the Temple Services,

244 S E R M O N XIII.

vices, and the vain Attempts to restore them. Indeed the thorough Understanding of this Verse is of less Consequence, because what immediately relates to Messiah, who is the great Subject of our Inquiry, had been concluded in the Verse preceding: Nor had I made it part of the Text, but for the Sake of those Words to which the Evangelists allude, *viz.* the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by *Daniel* the Prophet; which evince, that they thought the entire Prophecy concerned our Saviour, and the Times next after him.

Having thus shewn, how the Prophecy before us suits with the Events of Jesus's History, I should thence immediately infer, how unjustly the Cause of Christianity is dealt withall by its infidel Adversaries, when they insinuate, that the Testimonies for it, from the Prophecies of the Old Testament, are impertinently and weakly alleged. But those same Adversaries, it must be owned, have endeavoured to take from us this clear Prophecy, which they justly term the Sheet-Anchor of the Christian

S E R M O N XIII. 245

tian Cause ; pretending that the Event of Jesus cannot be found here, without doing the utmost Violence to the Text in every Part. Let us hear therefore what their principal Writer has to offer in support of so hardy an Assertion.

First then, we are told, that instead of the present Translation *seventy Weeks are determined*, the *Hebrew* should be rendered *seventy Weeks are shortened or abbreviated* : His Meaning is, that they are reduced to sixty two Weeks, by making the seven Weeks and the sixty two Weeks begin at the same Epoch, or Date of Time : But if from the going forth of the Commandment to build and restore *Jerusalem*, we reckon sixty two Weeks of Years, it will make only 434, which Number of Years will not reach to the Times of Jesus.

The Force of this Objection turns upon the true Meaning of the *Hebrew* Word, which we render *determined*, and which our Adversary says ought to be translated *cut, shortened, or abbreviated*. So he avers

246 S E R M O N XIII.

it is rendered in the *Greek*, in the *Vulgate*, and in *Tertullian*; and he adds, that the original Word, both in *Hebrew* and *Chaldee*, signifies to abbreviate or cut, and not to determine.

Now, would any one imagine, that there should scarce be the Appearance of Truth in any of these dogmatical Assertions, and that where there is some small Resemblance of Truth there should be no Manner of Pertinence. But this nevertheless is the very Case.

For *First*, As to the rendering of the *Greek*, what he says is only so far true, that it uses the Word συντίμνω, which may signify to cut or abbreviate. But then it is to be noted; that the present *Greek* of *Daniel* is not the old *Septuagint* Version, but that of *Theodotion* 700 Years later than the former, and made purposely to hurt Christianity; that *Tertullian* and the *Vulgate* fervilely follow the *Greek* of *Theodotion*, who perhaps after all meant thereby, not to cut or to abbreviate, but to determine. For

S E R M O N XIII. 247

it is well known, that of all the *Greek* Translators of the Bible, *Theodotion* keeps closest to the *Septuagint*. But the LXX by the Word *συντέμνω*, always mean to decide and to determine. And further, when they want to express Abbreviation of Time, as sometimes they do, their *Greek* for it is never *συντέμνω*, nor any other Compound with *τέμνω*, but quite different Words, such as *ὀλιγώω*, or else *σμικρύνω*.

And as to the important Part of his Assertion, that the original Word, both in *Hebrew* and *Chaldee*, signifies to abbreviate and cut, and not to determine, it is absolutely false. For the original Word occurs no where in the *Hebrew* Bible, but in the Passage before us, nor in the *Chaldee* Paraphrase more than once likewise, *viz.* on *Esth.* iv. 5. In both which Places, as the very learned Dean *Prideaux* justly observes, the original Word *Nechtac*, signifies to decide or to determine, without any Intimation of cutting or abbreviating.

A second Reason offered by the same Hand, why the seventy Weeks should be contracted or abbreviated is, that in the next Verse the Angel, computing the Time to Messiah the Prince, says, *It shall be seven Weeks and sixty two Weeks*, which ought not to be understood of sixty nine successive Weeks ; because no one that spake of such successive Weeks, would thus divide them ; as none, when they mean such a Thing shall be done in nine Years, ever say it shall be done in two Years and seven Years.

In Answer to this we have to offer, that what he says no one would do, has been frequently done both in sacred and profane Writings. Thus *Moses*, *Gen. v.* speaking of one hundred and five successive Years, the Age of *Seth*, when he begat *Enos*, divides them in like Manner, saying, *And Seth lived five Years, and one hundred Years, and begat Enos* : And so expresses himself, on these Occasions, throughout the Genealogies of the Patriarchs in the same Chapter.

S E R M O N XIII. 249

Chapter. And in like Manner the Prophet *Ezekiel*, instead of Saying that the *Jewish Maneb* or *Mina*, should consist of sixty Shekels, expresses himself in broken Numbers thus: *Twenty Shekels, five and twenty Shekels, fifteen Shekels, shall be your Maneb.* *Ezek. xlv. 12.* Nay, even *Tully*, the Father of *Roman Eloquence*, used in this very Manner to break successive Numbers. Thus in his second Book of the Nature of the Gods, when he would say, that three hundred and sixty five daily Circuits of the Sun, with the Addition of about six Hours, make up its yearly Course, he expresses himself thus: "Five and sixty and three hundred
" Circuits of the Sun's Orbit, with the
" Addition of about the fourth Part of a
" Day, make up his annual Course." But perhaps the Objector may mean that no Man would divide an Unite or a Number under Ten: And yet of this also, in the Opinion of learned Men, we are not without some Scripture Examples; particularly in the 1st and 2d Chapters of *Amos*. There God meaning to declare to several People that he would punish their Oppres-
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250 S E R M O N XIII.

for, and that even the repeated Transgressions of those People should not hinder him from taking his intended Vengeance upon their respective Enemies, tho' those Transgressions should multiply even to the Number seven, he thus divides that Unite: *For three Transgressions, and for four I will not turn away the Punishment.* Upon the whole, therefore, the seven Weeks, divided from the sixty two Weeks in this famous Prophecy, might nevertheless, together with it, make the successive Number of sixty nine, and both might reckon from one common Epoch.

A second Cavil against applying these sixty nine Weeks to the Time of Jesus the Messiah, is founded upon the Period from whence the Reckoning is to commence. The Angel in the Prophecy says, *from the going forth of the Commandment.* Now, by the Commandment the Objector will have to be meant the Word of God to *Jeremiah*, promising a Return from Captivity at the End of seventy Years. But if from hence we reckon sixty nine Weeks of
Years,

S E R M O N XIII. 251

Years, it will fall greatly short of the Times of Jesus the Saviour. And truly we agree with him, that, if by the going forth of the Commandment, *Jeremiah's* Prophecy abovementioned is necessarily to be understood, we should be forced to give up the Prophecy here contended for. Now, such a Necessity he pleads there is, affirming, that the Word Commandment always signifies in the Scriptures a divine Prediction or Promise: Of which relating to the Building of *Jerusalem*, the latest was that given to *Jeremiah*. Who now that reads or hears this would not immediately suppose our Author to mean, that the *Hebrew* Word, which our Bible Translation englishes here by Commandment, always signified a divine Prediction or Promise, and never an human or royal Edict: And yet such an Assertion would be found false in almost innumerable Instances: Does then this profane Trifler mean only that our own Translators, by Commandment always intend a divine Promise, Prediction, or Precept, and never the Decree of a Prince, or other human Superior? But this

252 S E R M O N XIII.

this likewise is contradicted by great Variety of Examples, where those Interpreters express a royal or parental Injunction by the Word Commandment ; and would be little to the Purpose, had it been ever so true. We can therefore resolve this utterly false Assertion into nothing else but the Malice of this Writer against Revealed Religion, who plainly sticks at no Falseness in support of the Infidel Cause, and often affirms and denies, as makes most for it, without Regard to Truth and common Modesty. Nothing hinders therefore, but that the going forth of the Commandment to build and restore *Jerusalem*, may denote some Royal Decree given out for that Purpose : And indeed it seems necessary thus to understand it, and not of *Jeremiah's* Prediction. Because, tho' God by him promised his People a Return from their Captivity at *Babylon* ; yet did he at no Time by himself Promise or Predict a Re-building of *Jerusalem*. In short, a Commandment to build *Jerusalem* is what we are to look after ; and at the going forth of such Commandment are we to

S E R M O N XIII. 253

fix the Commencement of *Daniel's* Weeks. For which Reason neither is the Decree of *Cyrus* a fit Epoch for this Purpose : Because that extended no further than to the Building of the Temple. This indeed our Author is pleased to call the Beginning of the Building of *Jerusalem*, because the Temple was the chief Part of the Holy City. But who in his Wits would prefer an implied or virtual Command for the Building of *Jerusalem*, to one that was exprefs for that Purpose, such as accordingly went forth under *Artaxerxes* in the 20th Year of his Reign ? To say, as this Writer does, that the Decree of *Cyrus* being the first in Point of Time, the first after the supposed Date of *Daniel's* Prophecy, and the Foundation of all the subsequent royal Decrees or Commandments in Favour of the *Jews*, merits only the Name of the Commandment in Question ; to argue, I say, thus is mere trifling : For the Prophecy in *Daniel* plainly specifies the Decree intended, by its Purport, *viz.* to build and restore *Jerusalem*. Without regarding therefore which of the subsequent

254 S E R M O N XIII.

quent royal Decrees was first or last in Point of Time, nearer to, or remoter from the Date of the Prophecy, our sole Rule is to find a Decree, that expressly comes up to the Terms of the Prophecy ; a Decree to restore and build *Jerusalem*, which the Decree of *Cyrus* falls short of, and therefore, notwithstanding all its other Advantages, is to be rejected ; whilst the Commandment in the 20th of *Artaxerxes* fully answering the Description of the Decree in *Daniel*, best deserves to be the Epoch from which we are to begin the Reckoning of his Weeks. I should proceed to consider the remaining Objections, this Prophecy, and the *Æra* of Calculation last mentioned ; but having already sufficiently trespassed on your Patience, I reserve them for the next Opportunity.

S E R M O N XIV.

DANIEL ix. 24, 25, 26, 27.

24 *Seventy Weeks are determined upon thy People, and upon thy holy City, to finish the Transgression, and to make an End of Sins, and to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to seal up the Vision and Prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.* 25 *Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the Commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven Weeks; and threescore and two Weeks the Street shall be built again, and the Wall, even in trou-*
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256 S E R M O N XIV.

blous Times. 26 And after threescore and two Weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: And the People of the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the City and the Sanctuary, and the End thereof shall be with a Flood, and unto the End of the War Desolations are determined.

27 And he shall confirm the Covenant with many for one Week: And in the midst of the Week he shall cause the Sacrifice and the Oblation to cease: And for the overspreading of Abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the Consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the Desolate.

IN a former Lecture on this Prophecy, after setting forth its Relation to our Saviour Jesus Christ, I proposed to consider the Objections that have been made against its being applied in that Manner. And as
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S E R M O N XIV. 257

the Strength and Clearness of the Application rests chiefly on our fixing a right Period for the Commencement of the Lxx Weeks, from whence we are to reckon to the Coming of Christ, to wit, the 20th Year of *Artaxerxes*; so the Adversary, with whom we have to deal on this Subject, makes it his chief Endeavour to set aside that Method of Computation,

His Argument, if I take him right is this. *Daniel's* Weeks were to commence from a Decree for a Return from Captivity, and a Rebuilding of *Jerusalem*; but none of the Royal Decrees answer both these Purposes, except that made by *Cyrus*; particularly, not that in the 20th Year of *Artaxerxes*, which relates only to the latter of them, the Rebuilding of *Jerusalem*: Therefore the Commandment of *Cyrus* must alone be reckoned from in the Computation of these Weeks. If we ask, how he can make it appear, that the Commandment in *Daniel* runs for a Return from Captivity,

258 S E R M O N XIV.

as well as for rebuilding *Jerusalem*; he will answer, that the original Word, which, in our Bibles, is rendered *restore*, literally signifies to cause to return, and is so translated by *Santes Pagninus*: But this not being applicable to the City of *Jerusalem*, must be meant of its Inhabitants. And yet it is plain, that *Pagninus* does apply both to the City *Jerusalem*, without mentioning its Inhabitants, or their Return from Captivity: For his *Latin* is *ad reverti faciendum & ad edificandum Jerusalem*: So that *Jerusalem* belongs equally to both these Words, and consequently to make to return, as well as to build, must be understood of the City, which, by this Mode of Expression, is represented as if it too had been captivated with its old Inhabitants, and was restored by being rebuilt. Nor is this the only Passage, wherein the original Word is applied to a Place, as well as to a Person, signifying to recover it for its former Owner, or to restore it to its former Use and Condition*. In one Word, the

* See 2 Sam. viii. 3. 1 Reg. xii. 21. 2 Chron. xi. 1. Esai. lviii. 12.

S E R M O N XIV. 259

the second Decree of *Artaxerxes* expressly and literally answers to the Commandment for restoring and building *Jerusalem*, which no antecedent Royal Mandate, from the Time of the Captivity, had done ; and therefore seems the only one meant from the going forth, whereof *Daniel* was to reckon 69 Weeks unto Messiah the Prince.

Once more, against the Computation of the 69 Weeks, from the 20th Year of *Artaxerxes*, the same Writer argues, that this is making the Weeks begin 87 Years after this Prophecy. But says he, if that be so, it must be allowed, that *Daniel* himself knew not the Beginning nor End of the Weeks, nor understood his own Prophecy : And that tho' the Angel bid him know and understand the Vision, yet he knew and understood nothing.

Now that *Daniel* should not understand his own Prophecy, has nothing new or uncommon in it. It was the general Case of the old Prophets, as *St. Peter* (1 *Cap.* 1. *Ep. Gen.*) informs us, where speaking of

260 S E R M O N XIV.

Salvation of Christ, he affirms, *That the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who have prophesied of the Grace that should come unto us, searching what or what manner of Time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow. Unto whom, adds the Apostle, it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the Things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, which Things the Angels desire to look into.*

True indeed it is, that in the Case before us, the Prophet is bid to know and understand, and therefore it may be presumed, that something in the Vision was to be manifest and clear: But it does not follow thence, that every Thing in it was precisely to be understood by him: Nor will it be just to say that, because he knew not every Thing concerning the Vision, therefore he knew and understood nothing

S E R M O N XIV. 261

concerning it. Many Parts of this Prophecy were clear and of great Moment : Such were the Rebuilding and Restoration of the City, as well as of the Temple at *Jerusalem* ; the coming of *Messias*, who is never, save in the present Instance, absolutely mentioned by that Name in all the prophetick Writings ; the plain Declaration that this *Messiah* shall be cut off ; that both the City and the Sanctuary should again be destroyed by a Royal Army ; that the Sacrifice and Oblation should cease not for a Time only, as in the *Babylonish* Captivity, but even until the Consummation, *i. e.* to the End of the World. Now, were all these Particulars in this Prophecy clearly known and understood by *Daniel*, to pass for nothing, because he knew not the Epochs of the Weeks ? The Facts of the Prophecy were of greatest Concern to *Daniel*, and they were all intelligible : And if the Circumstance of Time was not definitively set down, that was Matter rather of Curiosity than Use to him. What was unknown to *Daniel* in this Regard, the Event of Things, the surest of all prophe-

262 S E R M O N XIV.

tick Keys, has cleared up to the Generations after him, for whose Sakes this Prediction was recorded.

But supposing Christian Apologists rightly to have fixed the going forth of the Commandment, in the 20th Year of *Artaxerxes*, our Adversary further insists upon it, that this Prophecy has no Relation to the Messias Jesus; because the Matters to be accomplished within the Compass of the 70 Weeks, visibly concern a different Event, *viz.* the setting up and Continuance of the *Jewish* State and Policy. Now the Matters here spoken of are these which follow. To finish Transgression, and to make an End of Sin; to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness; and to seal up the Vision and Prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Out of these he singles the two last, as most visibly regarding the Establishment and Continuance of the *Jewish* State: Let us therefore consider, how well he explains and adapts them to that Purpose. The first of them is the Sealing up
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S E R M O N XIV. 263

the Vision and Prophecy: This strong Expression he expounds to mean no more than the fulfilling a particular Prophecy, that of *Jeremy*, concerning the Return of the People from the *Babylonish* Captivity at the Expiration of 70 Years. Now, supposing that to seal Prophecy means here to fulfill it, what should hinder, but that it may refer to the coming of Christ, which was foretold by all the Prophets that have been since the World began? Surely so grand a Coincidence of Predictions, is a more worthy Meaning of sealing up Vision and Prophecy, that the Completion of one or two particular ones is. But after all, it should rather seem, that sealing up Vision and Prophecy here means putting an End to them: For in this very Verse, what we translate, *to finish Transgression*, in the Letter of the Original is, *to seal up Transgression*. By a Parity of Reason therefore, to seal up Vision and Prophecy, should be to finish them. And accordingly this was effected at the coming of Christ, whose Religion was the last of God's revealed Will to Mankind: After this, Vision and

264 S E R M O N XIV.

Prophecy for those Purposes were sealed up, *i. e.* were to be no more. Besides, the fulfilling of *Jeremy's* Prediction, concerning the Return from *Babylon*, could never be one of the Matters to be compleated within the Compass of the 70 Weeks; because, as has been already shewn, those 70 Weeks did not, nor could commence, till after that Prophecy was actually fulfilled.

The second Matter to be accomplished within the Compass of the 70 Weeks, and which the Writer, with whom we have to do, pretends does visibly relate, not to *Messias*, but to the setting up and Continuance of the *Jewish* State, is the anointing the most Holy, which he says, concludes the Scene. How then does he make out this Point? Why, he tells us, that the *Hebrew* Words translated in the Bible *most holy*, are the common Appellation for the High Priest among the *Jews*, and also the most sacred Place of their Temple called the *Holy of Holies*: So that to anoint the
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S E R M O N XIV. 265

Holy of Holies was the same, as to set up a High Priest and Temple Worship.

But here, as too commonly elsewhere, our Adversary sets out with advancing a most grievous Untruth; namely, when he says, that the *Hebrew* Words translated in the Bible *most holy*, are the common Appellation of the High Priest among the *Jews*. This is so far from Truth, that I question, whether those Words do so much as once signify the High Priest in the entire Bible: Nay, I think I might venture to say it never so signifies. To anoint therefore the most Holy, cannot possibly mean to set up a *Jewish* High Priest. We grant him, indeed, that the *Hebrew* Words rendered in the Prophecy *most holy*, are often put for the most sacred Place of the *Jewish* Temple. But then the Misfortune is, that the Designation of the Temple for a Place of Worship, was not performed by anointing: He sends us indeed to *Exod.* xl. 9. which mentions the anointing of the Tabernacle, and its Vessels: But this is nothing to his Subject, *viz.* Temple Worship;

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266 · S E R M O N XIV.

no Part of the Temple having been ever consecrated by Oil. Upon the whole therefore, we find no one of the Matters, which were to be accomplished within the Compass of LXX Weeks, which visibly relates to the setting up and Continuance of the *Jewish* Religion; but the whole of them may, without the least Violence, be referred to the Times of Christ: Then Transgression was finished, and an End put to Sin in more than one illustrious Sense: Offerings on these Accounts ceased at that Time to be longer necessary, and the Guilt and Punishment of them were superseded, a Reconciliation being made for Iniquity by Christ our High Priest on the Cross: Then also was Vision and Prophecy sealed up, the principal Ends of them having been answered in Christ, the great Center of Prediction. Lastly, then was the most holy Jesus anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with Power to teach, and to save lost Mankind. But to return.

It seems further objected, against applying the Words Messiah the Prince in this
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S E R M O N XIV. 267

Prophecy, to Jesus, that *Nagid*, or Prince, universally taken, is a Governor of a People, or a Leader of an Army; and therefore ought not to be understood of Jesus, who was neither one nor the other. But here let it be noted, that the Question before us is not so much what *Nagid* signifies, when it stands singly, as when it is joined with *Messias*. Now he cannot shew, where any Prince, Leader, or Priest, was ever called *Messias Nagid*, the Words never occurring jointly, save in the second Verse of the Text: Besides, over and above the Significations of a Governor of a People, and Leader of an Army, *Nagid* signifies a Superior of an Order or Society; and in this Sense *Messiah Nagid* may denote the Principal or Chief of the Denomination *. Many were called *Messiahs*, all indeed who had a Designation to their Office by being anointed, and particularly Kings and Priests: So that the *Messiah Nagid* of the Text was, most probably, the chief and most distinguished Person under these Characters: But such was Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, and the High Priest of our Profession, the great

* See 1 Par. xi. 20.

268 S E R M O N XIV.

great Antitype of those who had been God's Anointed, both in the Royal and Sacerdotal Office.

Once more it is pretended by some, that the Words *Messiah shall be cut off*, should have been rendered *Unction shall be cut off*; thereby to elude the Application of this Prophecy to our Saviour and his Death. And true it is, that one *Greek* Translator thus gives us the Words: But who was this Translator? Not one that lived before our Saviour, and who consequently had no Byass upon him to pervert the obvious Sense of the Words; but *Theodotion*, who lived two Ages after Christ, and was a professed Enemy to his Messiahship. If he therefore first introduced this forced Version, and by the Unction meant not Christ, putting the Adjunct for the Subject, all we need say is, that he acted therein like a Man under invincible Prepossessions. For the Word *Messiah* in the Verse foregoing, is, on all Hands, allowed to denote a Person; and in this Verse the same Word occurring, should naturally denote a Person likewise,

S E R M O N XIV. 269

likewise, especially being joined with a Verb that is usually predicated of a Person. To cut off a Person is common in the sacred Writings; but to cut off an Institution, meaning thereby, that it should be vacated or made to cease, is Language unnatural in itself, and without a Parallel in Scripture. And for these Reasons doubtless it was, that the other *Greek* Interpreters, who laboured under the same Prejudices with *Theodotion*, I mean *Aquila* and *Symmachus*, both render personally. The first says, the *Anointed* shall be cut off: The second *expressly*, the Christ shall be cut off. After all, for my own Particular, I am inclined to believe, that *Theodotion* did not first introduce the Version ascribed to him, but that he took it, as his Manner frequently was, from the old Translation of the LXX. I am farther of Opinion, that when they rendered the *Anointing* shall be cut off, they nevertheless meant it personally, tho', probably, for prudential Reasons, they might purposely express themselves with some Degree of Obscurity. And from hence, probably,

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270 S E R M O N XIV.

St. *John* borrowed his Diction in the 27th Verse of the 2d Chapter of his general Epistle, where he speaks of the *Anointing*, which we have received of God, abiding in us, and of the same *Anointing*, teaching us of all Things. For that by the *anointing*, he there means the Anointed, or Christ, seems plain, from the personal Characters joined with it in that same Verse, and plainer still from the following one, in which the Apostle speaks of the appearing and coming of this *Unction*, or *Anointing*, that is, of Christ. But this by the By. Upon the Whole, if, by the *Unction* being cut off, the *Greek* Interpreter, referred to in this Argument, whoever he was, meant Christ or Messiah, as he must, if he had any Meaning at all, it is the same Thing to our Purpose, and the Prophecy is still applicable to Jesus our Saviour.

But in order to defeat this Application, it is also observed by the great Manager against Christianity, as founded upon Prophecy, that not one of the old *Greek* Fathers, either recite these Words, *the Christ shall*

S E R M O N XIV. 271

shall be cut off, or understand them of Christ the Saviour. The same also is true of the *Latin* Fathers; many of whom read *cessabit Unctio*, the Unction shall cease; which they thought meant the Death of *Hircanus* the High Priest, and the Cessation of the Sacrifices.

Now, as to the *Greek* and *Latin* Fathers not reciting these Words *the Christ shall be cut off*, or not understanding them of Christ, if the Observation was true, it makes nothing against their being so to be understood. For how should they recite Words, that as appears above, were not in their Bibles, where they read only the *Unction* shall be cut off; and what Wonder is it, if they, not knowing, or however not being certain, that by the Unction was meant Christ, did not understand this particular Passage of Jesus the Saviour? Will it thence follow, that it is impertinent in us, who have the Prophecy express, that *Messiah* was to be cut off, to apply it to Jesus, who was the only *Messiah*, that was cut off in or near the Times therein fixed for that Event?

272 S E R M O N XIV.

Event? No surely. Besides this Observation in Part is false, as well as wholly impertinent : For one *Latin* Father, viz. *St. Austin*, does recite the Words *Christ shall be cut off*; his *Latin* is *occidetur Christus*. And *Clemens Alexandrinus*, a very old *Greek* Father, understood the Main of this Prophecy of Christ the Saviour : To whose Times also *Tertullian*, an old *Latin* Father, applied this Prophecy, as appears by his understanding these Words the *Unction shall be cut off*, as fulfilled in the Destruction of the Temple. As for those many Fathers, who have the Passage *cessabit Unctio*, the Unction shall cease, he must name them before we can say any Thing to them. For my Part, I know none of this Sort. In a Word, most of the ancient Fathers, as well *Greek* as *Latin*, apply the two first Verses of the Text to the coming of our Saviour ; and that they did not so apply what follows, was owing to the ambiguous Translation of *Daniel* then in their Hands. For no sooner was this rectified by *Jerom's* new Version from the *Hebrew*, but the

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S E R M O N XIV. 273

Latins applied the 26th, as well as the foregoing Verses, to Christ the Saviour.

The last Objection I shall trouble you, or myself with, against understanding the Prophecy in the Text of Jesus Christ, is this.

The City and the Sanctuary were not destroyed by an Army under Jesus, in whose Time there was no War against *Jerusalem*: Wherefore the Destruction of the City and the Sanctuary, by the People of the Prince that should come, cannot relate to Jesus's Times.

Now, true it is, that Jesus did not personally and visibly appear at the Head of that People or Army, which destroyed the Sanctuary and City of *Jerusalem*: But as those People were brought before *Jerusalem*, by the Providence and Appointment of Jesus, the Latitude of prophetick Language will very well admit them to be called his People and his Army. Thus, when God thought good, in the Time of *Joel*

274 S E R M O N XIV.

the Prophet, to visit his People, by suffering the Locust, the Canker-worm, the Caterpillar, and the Palmer-worm, to eat up the Fruits of their Land, he calls those noxious Insects his great Army, which he sent amongst them. *Joel* ii. 25.

But how plausible, or just soever, such a Defence might be, we need it not : For the Objection is without Foundation. The Objector himself knew, that very few Expositors, by the Prince that should come, understand Jesus ; the most, and the most learned of them, explaining that Expression to mean *Titus*, who was the Commander of that Army, which took and burnt the Holy City and Sanctuary. Should we therefore admit the Validity of this Objection, it will not affect our Cause, but only the Methods of some particular Expositors. But farther, the Objector affirms, that the Desolation foretold in the last Verse of the Text, cannot mean the Destruction of the City and Sanctuary by *Titus*, because the *Romans* levelled the Temple to the Ground, and did not, and could not,
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S E R M O N XIV. 275

fix any Idol on the Battlement thereof, as is affirmed of the Destroyer in the Prophecy, and was true of *Antiochus*. But where, in the Name of Truth and Soberness, is it affirmed in this Prophecy, that the Destroyer, there spoken of, should fix an Idol on the Battlement of the Temple? The Word Temple is not once mentioned therein, nor perhaps was it at all meant, tho' some Interpreters have supposed it to be intimated in the *Hebrew* Word *Chonaph*, which signifies, when spoken of a Building, no more than a Battlement in general, and may be applied to the Walls of the Holy City, as well as to the Temple. Here, therefore, as in the Instance foregoing, our Adversary argues against the Application of this Prophecy to Christ, and the Times immediately following, not from the Prophecy itself, but from the Conceits of Expositors about it, all which may be given up, and the Cause of Christianity not to be at all affected by the Concession. In a Word, the *Romans* did to the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*, all that was clearly and necessarily foretold of the Desolator in this Prophecy,

276 S E R M O N XIV.

phesy; and therefore it may safely, and without any the least Absurdity, be applied to them. And whereas the Objector asserts, that the fixing an Idol on the Battlement of the Temple, was true of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, whom he will have to be the Subject of this latter Part of *Daniel's* Prophecy; he has not a sufficient Authority for so saying. The Writer of the first Book of *Maccabees* does indeed say, that the Abomination of Desolation was set upon the Altar: But sure there is a wide Difference between the Altar and the Battlements of the Temple. Our Author therefore concludes upon this Argument just as he began, scarce advancing a single Position, but what is either false or impertinent, and sometimes giving both in one.

Upon the whole then, we have here before us a Prophecy concerning Christ, and which points him out, not by Characters, Epithets, or Types, but by Name: A Prophecy which fixes the Time of his Appearance, and that not consequentially, but expressly. The *Epocha*, from which we are

S E R M O N XIV. 277

are to begin our Computation, is not set down in vague or indefinite Language, but we are precisely bid to reckon from the Command to restore and build *Jerusalem*: Nor was there more than one Royal Edict full to that Purpose, *viz.* that which was granted in the 20th Year of *Artaxerxes*. Computing then from that Period 69 Weeks of Years, we arrive at the 'Times of our blessed Lord's appearing in the World, who wonderfully fulfilled the Contents of this noble Prediction: Whereas every other Subject pitched upon, leads us to endless Confusion and Perplexity. The Times of *Antiochus*, which have been substituted with great Assurance by our Adversary, instead of the Times of Christ, are 160 Years too early; nor do the Incidents of that Age answer all the Particulars of the Prophecy: For tho' great Mischiefs were then done to the City of *Jerusalem*, and Dishonour and Defilement brought upon the Sanctuary, yet neither of them were destroyed. Besides, *Messias* the Prince according to this Scheme, or *Judas Maccabæus*, was not established till some Years after the Death

278 S E R M O N XIV.

of *Onias* (the Messiah to be cut off, as our Adversary explains Matters;) which quite inverts the Series of Events in *Daniel*, where *Messias* the Prince is to come in the Close of the 69 Weeks, and Messiah is not to be cut off, till after the Conclusion of that Period.

But thus it has ever fared, and ever will fare, with these Antichristian Schemists: All their Struggles against Religion end in nothing, besides a Discovery of their own Falseness and Folly. Great are the Truths of God, and they will prevail. *Now to God, &c.*

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S E R M O N XV.

I S A I A H liii. 7, 8.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth: He is brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth. He was taken from Prison and from Judgment: And who shall declare his Generation? For he was cut off out of the Land of the Living: For the Transgression of my People was he stricken.

THIS entire Chapter, and as far backward as from the 13th ver. of that which precedes, is one continued Prophecy relating to one and the same Person. In this all agree: Tho' they

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280 S E R M O N XV.

differ as to the Name of him, who is the Subject of this famous Prediction. In the New Testament, besides several Intimations and Allusions to the Language of the Prophecy, when Christ is spoken of, it is once at least expressly applied to him by *Philip*, in the 8th *Chap.* of *Acts*, on the following Occasion. An Eunuch of great Authority, under *Candace* Queen of *Aethiopia*, had been at *Jerusalem* for to worship, who tho' he was not a native *Jew*, became such by Conversion or Profelytism. On his Return home he read in his Chariot the Prophet *Esaïas*. *Philip*, who by the Command of the Spirit joined himself to the Chariot, hearing him read that Book, said to him, *Understandest thou what thou readeest?* The Eunuch confessed his Want of a Guide, and desired *Philip* to come up into the Chariot, and assist him to understand what he read. The Place of the Scripture, saith *St. Luke*, which he read was this: *He was led as a Sheep to the Slaughter, and like a Lamb dumb before his Shearers, so opened he not his Mouth. In his Humiliation his Judgment was taken*

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S E R M O N XV. 281

away, and who shall declare his Generation? For his Life is taken from the Earth. The Eunuch asked Philip, Of whom the Prophet spake? Of himself, or of some other Man? Then adds the sacred Historian, Philip opened his Mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. The immediate Consequence of this Preaching was the Eunuch's Conversion, the Profession of his Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and his Baptism. After which St. *Luke* observes, that *he went on his Way rejoicing.* The Question then arising upon this Fact, between Christians and Unbelievers, is, whether the Eunuch, a *Jew* by Principle, had sufficient Reason, upon the Strength of this in the Text, and other such Prophecies, to believe that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God.

And *First*, Without entering into the Merits of this Question, there is a strong Presumption on the affirmative Side of it, from the Character and Condition of the Eunuch. He was no mean or uneducated Person, but a Man in great Authority, under

282 S E R M O N XV.

der a mighty Queen. His Capacity must have been above the ordinary Standard, or else he had not been trusted with the Charge of all the *Ethiopian* Treasure. Would a Man thus qualified have been imposed upon by impertinent Allegations from the Old Testament, however artfully managed, and have admitted the Pretensions of Jesus to the Messiahship, at the first hearing, had they been apparently ill supported from Prophecy, as the Adversaries of Christianity pretend? But above all, would Arguments in themselves, weak and inconclusive, have been thus prevalent with this illustrious *Ethiopian*, from the Mouth of an illiterate Fisherman? He that can really believe all this imposes a much harder Task upon his own Faith and good Sense, than the Christian Church does, when she requires Assent to the Mysteries of the Gospel.

But *Secondly*, The Pertinence of the Chapter in *Isaiab*, where the Prophecy of the Text is found, to the Character and History of Jesus, will appear very evident
upon

S E R M O N XV. 283

upon a Comparifon of the one with the other. The Eunuch, to whom *Philip* preached Chrift from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, was then upon his Return from *Jerufalem*, where he had probably got Information in many Particulars of the Life and Death of our Saviour: For as then but two Years had paffed from his Crucifixion, and therefore the Difcourfe of this remarkable Perfon muft yet have been common and frefh in the Mouths of the Dwellers at *Jerufalem*. Suppofing therefore this to have been the firft Journey which the Eunuch made to that Place after he became a Profelyte, he could not return from thence without fome Knowledge of Jefus's Doctrines, and of the Wonders that attended him in his Life, and at, and after his Death. This then being fuppofed, and fure there is nothing improbable in the Suppofition, no fooner had *Philip* given him the Hint, that the Perfon meant and fpoken of by *Ifaiab* in the Text was Jefus the Prophet of *Nazareth*, but he muft obferve a wonderful Refemblance between
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224 S E R M O N XV.

the Prophecy and the History of that holy Man.

The Incredulity of the *Jews*, notwithstanding the plain Evidences of his divine Mission, clearly foretold in the 1st *ver.* of the Chapter, was exactly verified in the first Preaching of the Gospel ; and tho' the Bulk of that People eagerly expected Messias's Coming, and were ready to follow any Impostor, however slender his Pretences to that Character might be, whilst neither verifying of Prophecies, nor working Miracles, reconciled them to the blessed Jesus. The Reason of this unworthy Treatment follows next in the Prophecy, which sets forth the Poverty of his Parentage, the Lowness of his Fortunes, and the Meanness of his Appearance. He grew up as a tender Plant, and as a Root out of a dry Ground, he had no Form nor Comeliness ; and when his Countrymen saw him, he had no Beauty in their Eyes to render him desirable : Therefore he was despised and rejected by the Men of those Days, which made him appear destitute and miserable :
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S E R M O N XV. 285

The Consequence of which was, that they were ashamed of him, hid their Faces from him, thinking him too mean ever to prove, as they expected Christ should, the temporal Saviour and Deliverer of his People. And yet he bore (as is foretold in the 4th *ver.*) their Grievs, and carried their Sorrows. By a Word speaking he removed the bodily Infirmities of all that came in his Way, which beneficent Behaviour merited their Respect, tho' contrarywise they reckoned him a Demoniac, a Madman, one whom God for his Sins had smitten with Vengeance. But says the 5th and 6th *ver.* *He was wounded for our Transgressions; he was bruised for our Iniquities: The Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and with his Stripes we are healed. All we like Sheep have gone astray: We have turned every one to his own Way, and the Lord hath laid on him the Iniquity of us all.* Here in the liveliest Colours is represented the Sufferings of our blessed Lord, with the meritorious Causes thereof. He had no Sins of his own to answer for, either in this World, or the next. In-

much

286 S E R M O N 'XV.

much that when his Enemies had exerted their Wit and Malice to the utmost, in devising Accusations against him, *Pontius Pilate*, his Judge, openly declared, that he found no Fault in him. In the Nature of the Thing therefore, when so innocent and sinless a Person was permitted to undergo Scorn, Wounds, Bruises, Stripes, and in the End Death itself, under one of its cruellest and most ignominious Shapes, it must have been with his own Consent, and to save others, or else the Justice of God's Proceedings would have been utterly indefensible : And that this was the very Case is abundantly declared in the New Testament. *John*, the Forerunner of Christ, early proclaimed him to be the Lamb of God that was to take away the Sins of the World : And *St. Peter*, alluding to this very Prophecy (1 *Pet.* ii. 24, 25.) says, that Christ in *his ownself bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree*, and that by his *Stripes we are healed* : Adding in the Language of our Prophet, *that we were as Sheep going astray*. Of Christ, with respect to these his vicarious Sufferings, the Scape-Goat,

S E R M O N XV. 287

Goat, mentioned in the 16th Chap. of *Leviticus*, was a most significant Type. For as *Aaron* laid upon the Head of that Goat all the Iniquities and Transgressions of the Children of *Israel*: So God, to use the Expression of our Prophet, *laid upon his dear Son the Iniquities of us all*. For which Reason most probable it is, that in the Choice of these Words, *Isaiah* had respect unto the Resemblance that was between them: But he proceeds more like an Evangelist than a Prophet, to describe the last sufferings of this Lamb of God, who was offered up for the Sins of the whole World. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth: He is brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth. He was taken from Prison and from Judgment, and who shall declare his Generation? For he was cut off out of the Land of the Living: For the Transgression of my People was he stricken.* The Circumstance so strongly and repeatedly insisted on, that this holy Sufferer, for the Sins of others, should not
open

288 S E R M O N XV.

open his Mouth, was exactly answered in the Behaviour of our Lord at the Time of his Arraignment before *Pilate*, and also before *Caiaphas* the High-priest; at which both *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark* observe, that the Governor marvelled greatly: And no Wonder, for he was a Stranger to this Prophecy, and knew not that the Prisoner at his Bar voluntarily offered up his Life as a Ransom for many. And tho' our Lord thereby fulfilled the Prophecy before us, yet such Behaviour would otherwise have been reasonable at this Juncture. For there are but two Causes in any Case to be assigned, why an innocent Person should defend himself against a capital Charge: One of which is, that he may make his Innocence appear, and the other, that he may not be necessary to his own Condemnation and Death: Men being obliged ordinarily to preserve their Lives by all honest and lawful Means; but neither of these Reasons had any Room in our blessed Lord's Case. Not the first: Because his Innocence was notorious both to his Accusers and his Judge. *Pilate* knew that the
 Chief

S E R M O N XV. 289

Chief Priests for Envy had accused him, and finding no Fault in him, even concerning those Things whereof the *Jews* accused him, laboured for his Release. Nor ought our Lord to be sollicitous for saving a Life, which he had voluntarily devoted as a Sacrifice of Attonement and Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World. And from hence it appears, that our Lord did not keep Silence merely because it had been foretold that *Messias*, when led like a Lamb to the Slaughter, should not open his Mouth; but that the Providence of God had so ordered Matters, that, if no such Prophecy had subsisted, a Defence of himself would have been needless, or rather unreasonable. Again, when *Isaiab* predicts, that this Servant of the Lord should be taken from Prison and from Judgment; methinks it figures to us not only a formal Arraignment, but likewise that Variety of Tribunals, before which the blessed Jesus was convened; first before the High Priest, then before *Pilate*, afterwards before *Herod* the *Tetrarch*, who remanded him back again to *Pilate* the Go-

290 S E R M O N XV.

vernor, till he, overcome at length by the Importunity of the People, condemned him, and by Virtue of whose Sentence he was cut off out of the Land of the Living, agreeably to what next follows in *Isaiab's* Prophecy, whose Words, as plain as Words can do, describe a regular *Judicial* Arraignment, and a capital Punishment, in Consequence thereof. After the Death of this extraordinary Person, the Prophet goes on regularly with the Circumstances of his Burial. *And he made his Grave with the Wicked, and with the Rich in his Death, because he had done no Violence, neither was Deceit found in his Mouth.* And accordingly, tho' our blessed Lord died in Company with Malefactors, yet *Joseph*, a rich Man of *Arimathea*, and before this a Disciple of his, tho' secretly for Fear of the *Jews*, now setting aside all past Apprehensions of Danger, boldly begged the Body of his dead Master, and having obtained it of the Governor, honourably interred it in a Tomb, which he had purposely cut out of the Rock to be buried in himself.

Thus

S E R M O N XV. 291

Thus far the Prophet dwells on the low and dolorous Condition of this eminent Servant of God. But now he describes him in a new and more exalted Condition, to which he should be advanced, as the Reward of his Patience and Suffering, which takes up the three remaining Verses of the Chapter. *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to Grief: When thou shalt make his Soul an Offering for Sin, he shall see his Seed, he shall prolong his Days, and the Pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his Hand. He shall see of the Travel of his Soul, and shall be satisfied: By his Knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many: For he shall bear their Iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a Portion with the great, and he shall divide the Spoil with the Strong: Because he had poured out his Soul unto Death: And he was numbred with the Transgressors, and he bare the Sin of many, and made Intercession for the Transgressors.*

And surely never were any prophetick Words more remarkably fulfilled, than these were in our blessed Saviour, both with Respect to the predicted Sufferings, and the Reward of them. For it pleased God, by the permitted Violence of wicked Men, to bruise him, and to subject him to many painful and offensive Indignities. The violent Struggles between the natural Desire of Life, and of avoiding the lingring Miseries of a Crucifixion, and his own stedfast Purposes of fulfilling his Part in the Covenant of Redemption, threw him into Agonies of Grief, and bloody Sweats; in-
 somuch that his Soul was sorrowful even unto Death: He likewise made himself freely an Offering for Sin. At any other Time, by the Means of a single Petition to his Father, he could have obtained twelve Legions of Angels for a Guard to his sacred Person, and the combined Powers of the whole World would have been too weak to effect his Destruction. This himself declared to *Peter* when officiously attempting his Rescue by the Arm of Flesh: On which
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S E R M O N XV. 293

he adds ; *But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be ?* In order therefore to verify the Scriptures of the Prophets, and his heavenly Father's Will, he made his Soul, *i. e.* his Life, an Offering for Sin. He that had such Energy of Expression at Command, as to stay Officers of Justice from executing the Orders of their Superiors for apprehending him, now forbore even to defend himself. On the former Occasion, his Hour not being then come, he spake as never Man spake, and thereby prevented an immature Fate. But when all Things were accomplished, he quietly and silently submitted to what had been ordained from the Foundation of the World, and meekly bore his Cross. When that his last Scene of Misery came on, he was content to be numbered with the Transgressors, to die by the Hand of Justice, like a common Malefactor, and to hang on the accursed Tree between two Thieves. Lastly, He not only pardoned those most wicked of all Transgressors, who maliciously and barbarously promoted his Death, but came up to the Letter of the

U 3 Prophecy,

294 S E R M O N XV.

Prophecy, and made Intercession for them, in those gracious Words, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

All this being considered, it was no Wonder, that the promised Reward of all these his predicted Sorrows and Sufferings was made good to him. In a most eminent Sense he saw his Seed, not the Offspring of his Body, but the Fruit of his spiritual Labours. He saw soon after his Resurrection, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Disciples, Numbers of Converts to that Faith, of which he was the Author and Finisher, and in every successive Generation, to the End of Time, will see Children of the Promises, and Heirs of that Inheritance, which he purchased for all sincere Believers. Tho' he died once, yet Death had but a short Dominion over him, being raised again on the third Day, and thenceforward prolonging his Days so as to die no more. From this Time all Power in Heaven and Earth was given unto him; so that the Pleasure of the Lord prospered in his Hand. The Sound of his Gospel

S E R M O N XV. 295

Gospel went into all Lands, and his Words unto the Ends of the World. Idolatry and false Worship, tho' for a Time supported by human Power and Policy, in the End was removed, to make away for the true Religion; and tho' the outward State of the Church may vary in Point of Splendor and Prosperity, the Gates of Hell, and the Attempts of unbelieving Men never have, nor ever will prevail against her: But Christ, our High Priest, will incessantly see the Travel of his Soul, and be satisfied. The Prophet proceeds, saying; *By his Knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many: For he shall bear their Iniquities.* Here is represented the Gospel-Doctrine of Redemption by the Blood of Christ. As many as believe and obey that System of Knowledge, which he imparted to the World, shall, at the last Day, be justified in their Sayings, and clear when they are judged. The Benefits of Christ's Death will be extended to them, and their Iniquities be reputed among those which he bare in his own Body upon the Tree.

After this comes the close of *Isaiab's* Prediction, *viz.* that *because* this righteous Servant of God *hath poured out his Soul unto Death, and was numbered with the Transgressors, and bare the Sins of many, and made Intercession for the Transgressors,* God *will divide him a Portion with the great, and he shall divide the Spoil with the Strong.* The Completion of this Prophecy cannot be better made out, than in the Words of *St. Paul*, in his 2d Chap. to the *Philippians*, wherein we are informed, that *because Christ Jesus humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross :* Therefore God *also hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name :* That at the Name of *Jesus every Knee should bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth, and Things under the Earth ; and that every Tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.* God in Consideration of his Sufferings, and Condescension for us Men and our Salvation, hath exalted Christ in his human Nature to the

Right-

S E R M O N XV. 297

Right-hand of his Majesty in Heaven, dividing with him his Throne, and investing him in a Share of the Spoils of Death and Hell, and of every other Enemy of Truth and Righteousness.

Thus we see that every Part of this illustrious Prophecy easily coincides with the History of the Life, Death, Resurrection, and Session of Christ at the Right-hand of the Majesty on High. So that if there were no internal Marks in the Prediction itself, by which it might be adjudged to belong to Christ before those Events happened, the Events themselves sufficiently explain its Meaning, and loudly call for such an Application. But here the Case happens to be far otherwise: For the *Targum*, the ancientest and most authentick of all the *Jewish* Writings, or *Chaldee* Paraphrase, on this Prophecy, explains the Person, who in the Beginning of it is called God's Servant, and who is the invariable Subject of it throughout the entire Prediction, by the express Name of *Messias*, and repeats the same Explication in the 10th
ver.

298 S E R M O N XV.

ver. of the 53d *Chap.* calling the Seed of this Servant of God the Kingdom of Messiah. Great surely was the Force of Truth upon the Minds of these *Chaldee* Expositors, which constrained them to apply a Prophecy to Messiah, wherein such strong and frequent mention is made, not only of his Sufferings, but his violent Death likewise, tho' the Messiah, by them expected, was to be from the first Entrance on his Character perpetually prosperous, and to abide for ever. To salve this, they have given a Turn to most of the Passages in which the Death of Messiah is foretold, tho' without the least Countenance from the Prophecy itself, which throughout speaks of the same Subject wherewith it begins, and of him only : So that upon the whole, in this ancient Paraphrase, we at the same Time see the Force of Truth and Prejudice. To the former, we owe the right Application of *Isaiak's* Words in general ; and to the latter, the plain Perversion of his Meaning, in some Particulars, against all the Rules of Grammar, and Maxims of sound Interpretation. With the *Targum*, in the
general

S E R M O N XV. 299

general Application of the Prophecy under Consideration to Messias, agree the *Talmudical* Writings, and some of the most celebrated *Jewish Rabbis*, explaining even the Grievs and Afflictions therein mentioned, except those of Death, to him. Surely therefore the same Application of *Isaiab's* Words by inspired Persons, when they preached Christianity to *Jews*, was not only not impertinent, but to them, at least, was an unanswerable Argument of its Truth. We might go farther, and say, that to reasonable Men of all Religions, who were persuaded of the Antiquity of *Isaiab's* Prophecy, and the Truth of our Lord's Sufferings and Death, the Correspondence between them must appear no inconsiderable Argument in Favour of the Gospel. And accordingly it is remarkable, that the Author of the Scheme of literal Prophecy, whose aim it was to destroy all Evidence of this Kind to the Truth of Christianity, is never so jejune and trifling, as when he opposes the Application of *Isaiab's* Words to our Saviour Christ. Hardened as he was in Infidelity, he had not the Courage to
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300 S E R M O N XV.

enter on a particular Discussion of the Point, but chuses rather to quarrel with a modern Paraphrase on the Words, than with the plain and obvious Aspect of the Words themselves, towards the tragical Incidents of our dear Redeemer's Story.

It must not be concealed, that others have been set up, as the direct, if not the only Subject of this Prophecy; but with how little Cause, and indeed how against all Reason and Probability, will, I trust, be made appear when I come to consider what has been offered upon that Head; which, God willing, I purpose to do in my next Lecture.

S E R M O N XVI.

ISAIAH lii. 7. 8.

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his Mouth : He is
brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter,
and as a Sheep before her Shearers
is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth.
He was taken from Prison, and from
Judgment, and who shall declare
his Generation : For he was cut off
out of the Land of the Living, for
the Transgression of my People was
he stricken.*

IN my last Lecture upon these Words,
I laboured to shew, that the entire
Prophecy, of which the Text is a
Part, was, in its plain and obvious Sense,
fulfilled in the History of Jesus Christ our
Saviour,

302 S E R M O N XVI.

Saviour, and consequently that the Writers of the New Testament were thoroughly justifiable for applying the Prophecy to him. I shewed likewise, that the Characters of the Messiah were so visible and strong in this Prediction, that the oldest, and most authentick *Jewish* Expositors, could not avoid making him the main Subject of it, tho' their Prejudices against a dying Saviour would not suffer them to suppose he was singly meant therein.

But I told you in the Close of the Discourse, that other *Jews*, and some Christian Criticks, followed therein by modern Infidels, have given an entirely different Turn to this Prophecy, denying that it relates at all to Messiah, or at least not primarily, and setting up other Subjects of it. And how reasonable the Pretences of these Men, for so doing, are, must be examined at this Time.

It is insisted on then by some, that the whole Body of the *Jewish* People, under their Captivity, or other national Calamities,

S E R M O N XVI. 303

ties, are spoken of by the Prophet in the Words of my Text : But such an Application is so very absurd at the first Hearing, that it scarce deserves a Refutation. The Characters in the Prophecy are personal throughout, and could they be deemed national, are at the widest Distance from the Disposition and Temper of that People in general. It is true, their Sufferings have been many and grievous : But then so likewise have been the Provocations which have drawn so many national Miseries upon them. Had the Prophet *Isaiab* meant his Countrymen in the Prediction now before us, with what Colour of Truth could he say, that *Israel* had done no Violence, neither was Guile found in his Mouth ; when both he, and the Prophets his Countrymen, describe them at the same Time, as the most oppressive and the most wicked of all People ? What Self-contradiction would it be, after such frequent Denunciations of Vengeance against them for their national Iniquities, to represent them as wounded for other Men's Transgressions, and healing them by the Stripes they suffered ? Many other

304 S E R M O N XVI.

other insuperable Objections there are against this Interpretation: But more than enough has been said already, to shew the absolute Impropriety of it.

Another Completion of this noble Prophecy, and which is chiefly insisted on by Infidel Writers, against the Evidence for Christianity from Predictions in the Old Testament, relates to the Prophet *Jeremy*. This Conceit was first entertained by *Jewish* Authors, who, to elude the Application of *Isaiab's* Words to Jesus our Lord, and finding the Sufferings of their Countrymen an insufficient Subject for them, devised that *Jeremy* was intended therein. *Abarbinel*, a celebrated Writer amongst them, tho' a keen and strenuous Adversary to Christianity, could, by no Means, admit of this Interpretation, but opposed it as unreasonable and absurd. This, however, did not hinder a very learned Christian Commentator of the last Century from embracing this very Sentiment, after it had been exploded in the Synagogue. He did not, indeed, affirm, that the Prophecy

S E R M O N XVI. 305

phcey of *Isaiab* respected *Jeremy* singly and solely, but asserted that Christ our Lord was the secondary Subject thereof, and owned that the Particulars of it were more nobly, and sometimes more literally fulfilled in the Events of the Gospel, than in the History of *Jeremy*. Could this great and good Man have foreseen the ill Uses, that have been since made of his singular Opinion by Unbelievers, I assure myself he would at least have concealed his Sentiments, which at last appear to have no better a Foundation, than a Prejudice taken up towards the latter End of his Life, that none of the Prophets, before the Captivity, directly predicted the Christian Messiah, tho' they oft meant him remotely and secondarily. In Consequence of this Hypothesis he was obliged, whenever the Writers of the New Testament urged a Prediction in favour in Christ, that had been given out within that Period, to assign a Completion thereof earlier than Christ: And this was what led him, in the Case before us, to make *Jeremy* the primary Meaning of *Isaiab's* Prediction. Now,

VOL. I. X had

306 S E R M O N XVI.

had the Question, whether the Prophecy of the Text at all related to *Jeremy* or no, been only moved among Christians, it must not have had a Place in the present Lecture; because our pious Founder absolutely forbids us entring into any Controversies agitated among Christians. But the Conduct of our unbelieving Adversaries, who, upon the Strength of the learned *Grotius's* Authority, insist upon it, that *Jeremy* was the Person presignified by *Isaiab*, and thence affirm, that it can have no Relation to our Saviour, makes it a Discussion altogether agreeable to the Design of our noble Founder, to examine, whether it be at all probable, that the Sufferings of *Jeremiab* were within the Intention of *Isaiab's* Prophecy now before us: And if the Negative Side of this Question shall appear the most reasonable, Unbelievers will be disarmed of all Pretences for saying, that the inspired Writers of the New Testament, who claim this Prophecy, as fulfilled in Jesus, have therein acted weakly or impertinently.

First,

First, then, in general it seems against Reason and Precedent, that the Particulars of *Jeremy's* Sufferings should be largely foretold, any more than those of any other Prophet that arose after *Isaiab's* Time. *Jerusalem* has a Brand fixed upon her by our Saviour for killing the Prophets, and stoning them which were sent unto her; and yet the Mal-treatment of these inspired Messengers is not assigned, as the Matter of any special Prophecy. Why then should the ill Usage of *Jeremy*, which extended only to Stripes and Imprisonment, be thought worthy of taking up so much Room in the Predictions of *Isaiab*? Besides, what End of Providence could be answered hereby, but what might likewise have been answered by Predictions of other like, or even of stronger Cases, which yet were never made? Again, if *Jeremy's* Sufferings were certainly foretold by *Isaiab*, can he himself be supposed ignorant thereof? And if he had known it, how came it to pass, that when the predicted Sufferings happened, he was altogether silent about them, not once, in his Expostulations with the King of *Ju-*

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dab,

308 S E R M O N XVI.

dab, defending his Innocence from the Character of the Person prophesied of by *I-saiab*, *that he did no sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth?* but rather justifying himself from common Topicks. Many such Considerations as these offer themselves on a View of the Case in general, why it should not be supposed, that *Jeremy* was marked out in the Prophecy of the Text, and in what goes before and follows it: But the Words themselves so ill suit with the History of that holy Man, as to render all other Proof of his not being therein meant utterly needless.

The same Person is undoubtedly spoken of throughout the Prophecy, but under very different Conditions. At one Time, concerning this Servant of the Lord, it is foretold, *that he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high: That he shall sprinkle many Nations, and Kings shall shut their Mouths at him; that he shall see his Seed; he shall prolong his Days, and the Pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his Hand. Lastly, That God will divide him a Portion with the*

S E R M O N XVI. 309

the Great, and he shall divide the Spoil with the Strong. On the other Hand, of him, who is the Subject of this Prophecy, it is predicted, that *his Visage should be marred more than any Man, and his Form more than the Sons of Men; that he should have no Form nor Comeliness, nor Beauty to render him desirable; that he should be despised and rejected of Men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Griefs; that he should be esteemed a Man stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; that he should be oppressed and afflicted; be taken from Prison and from Judgment, and be cut off out of the Land of the Living.* Now it is confessed, that *Jeremiah* the Prophet had his Felicities, as well as his Sorrows and Sufferings; but then neither of them bear any tolerable Proportion to the Description made of either by *Isaiab*. Where, for Instance, do we find that *Jeremy* was exalted, extolled, and very high? When was it that Kings, or even great Men, so revered him, as to keep a respectful Silence before him? Do we not, on the other Hand, read of the evil Treatment he met with, both from

310 S E R M O N XVI.

Kings and Princes? The learned *Grotius* accounts for these Things, as fulfilled in *Jeremy*, by very low and disproportioned Instances. The *Chaldeans*, says he, shall do him great Honour; and, for the Completion of this, sends us to the 40th *Chap.* of *Jeremy*, where *Nabuzaradan* gives him his Liberty, with his Choice, either of going to *Babylon* with the Assurance of being well looked after there, or of staying in the Land; and in the End dismisses him with Victuals and a Reward. But was this exalting, extolling, or setting him very high? Again, *Kings shall shut their Mouths at him*, i. e. says the Commentator above, *Nebuchadnezzar* and *Pharaoh Necho* shall silently wonder at the exact Completion of his Prophecies in their own Times. As if it was any Thing uncommon for the Word of the Lord, by his Prophets, to be punctually fulfilled. Lastly, When the Text of *Isaiab* says, that the Person spoken of shall sprinkle many Nations, *Grotius* rightly explains it to mean, that he should convert many of the *Gentiles* from their Idolatry, but does not attempt to shew that this was verified by *Jeremy*.

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S E R M O N XVI. 311

In a Word, the Instances of *Jeremiah's* Prosperity, are neither many nor eminent: His speedy Deliverance from the noisom Dungeon, into which the Princes prevailed to have him cast, was the happiest Incident we know of concerning him. A larger and more wholesome Confinement followed upon this, and Liberty, with Security, after the taking of the City, by Order of *Nabuzaradan*, was the Top of Felicity attained to by him. This too continued but a short Time; for soon after the Death of *Gedaliah* his Patron exposed him to the Reproaches of *Johanan*, who carried him with the Remnant of the *Jews* into *Egypt*. And herewith ends all the Account left us in sacred Story of *Jeremiah* the Prophet. That *he prolonged his Days after this, and that the Pleasure of the Lord prospered in his Hand*, we have no Authority to affirm, nor even good Reason to suppose; much less that he divided a Portion with the great and the strong.

Grotius, instead of proving his Point as to these Things, takes it for granted, that *Jeremiah* lived long in *Egypt*; that by his

312 S E R M O N XVI.

Example and Instructions he converted many of that Place to Piety, and that the Presents made him by *Nabuzaradan*, were Part of the Spoils of *Jerusalem*. I say, he takes these Facts for granted, not one of them being countenanced by Scripture History.

As the Prosperity of this holy Man falls very short of what *Isaiab* foretold in the Prophecy, of which the Text is a Part; so his Adversity will admit of no Comparison with that which was to befall the Servant of the Lord. According to the Word of *Isaiab*, *he had his Afflictions*; but they were far from being such, as that on Account thereof the World should esteem him stricken and smitten of God. His Enemies shewed their Malice to him in more Instances than one; but never, that we read, of their Contempt. It is plain on the contrary, that they regarded him as a Prophet before they put him in Prison, and intreated his Prayers to the Lord their God for them. Extreme Poverty is generally one main Ground of worldly Contempt: But
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S E R M O N XVI. 313

we have one Proof that this was not *Jeremy's* Case: Because he made a Purchase of Land, even whilst he was in Prison, and paid for it 17 Shekels of Silver, as appears from the 32d *Chap.* of his Prophecy. It is also evident, that the great Occasion of *Jeremiab's* Sufferings, was rather his Reputation with the People as a true Prophet, than their Contempt of him. *He weakeneth*, say the Princes unto the King, *the Hands of the Men of War that remain in this City, and the Hands of the People, in speaking such Words unto them.* Such a Charge had been apparently absurd, if *Jeremiab* had been held in open Contempt by the *Jews*: For then no Prophecy of his would have obtained Credit, so as to dispirit the Soldiery and Populace at *Jerusalem*.

Further, *Isaiab* foretels of the Person, who was the Subject of his Prophecy, that he should be taken not only from Prison, but likewise from Judgment, *i. e.* from Trial: But *Jeremy*, tho' he was imprison'd, had no formal Trial, either before or
after

314 S E R M O N XVI.

after his Commitment. *Grotius*, sadly straightened here for a Simularity of Circumstance, begs the Question, as he often does elsewhere, and bears us in Hand, that *Isaiab* speaks of *Jeremy's* being judged, because the Evils he suffered were inflicted on him by a Pretence of Judgment. It is hard to say, what the learned Man means by this Solution, and equally so, to make out the Sense and Pertinence of any Thing he can be supposed to mean by it: For it does not appear that *Jeremy* had a Trial, or so much as the Form of one. He was, indeed, imprisoned under a Pretence of a Crime; but neither the Fact, nor the criminal Nature of it, is said to have been made out by his Accusers, or to have been confessed by the Party accused. But to proceed, *Isaiab*, after saying the Person, of whom he was speaking, should be taken from Prison and from Judgment, pursues the ordinary Course of judiciary Doings; and adds, *that he was cut off out of the Land of the Living*, i. e. he should be put to Death as a condemned Malefactor. But this was not verified of *Jeremy*: *Grotius* there-

S E R M O N XVI. 315

therefore makes them to have respected only his Imprisonment, and more eminently his being put in the dark and noisom Dungeon. But was ever Imprisonment however dark or uncomfortable, expressed in the strong Terms used by *Isaiab*, of being cut off out of the Land of the Living? This, therefore, from a Man of less known Affection to Religion than *Grotius* the great and the good, would have sounded like bantering, rather than explaining Scripture Prophecies. Besides, this Expression of being cut off out of the Land of the Living, can mean no less than being put to Death; because of the same Person it is also foretold, *ver. 12.* that *he should deliver or pour out his Soul unto Death*; which has nothing in it simular to *Jeremiab's* Confinement in a dark and solitary Dungeon. But even this our Critick endeavours to explain, as possibly meant, not of actually dying, but only of exposing himself to Danger of Death for the Truth's Sake. And in this Sense, if an allowed one, *Jeremy* undoubtedly *poured out or delivered his Soul unto Death*. But till he produces good Authorities for
this

316 S E R M O N XVI.

this Use of the Expression, he must excuse us from taking it in such a Sense: And I am thoroughly persuaded, that no such Thing will appear in the Phraseology of the sacred Writers.

As the Case of *Jeremiah*, with respect to his Sufferings, widely differs from that of the Person who is the Subject of *Isaiah's* Prediction; so it does as to the Cause of them. He was to be wounded for the Iniquities of others; the Chastisement of their Peace was to be upon him, and by his Stripes were they to be healed, and the Lord was to lay on him the Iniquities of them all: For the Transgression of God's People he was to be stricken. All these Expressions, in their natural and obvious Sense, denote, that this righteous Servant of God was to suffer, instead of others who had justly merited Punishment; and that, by such vicarious Sufferings, the Guilty were to obtain a Remission of their Sins: But this never happened, nor is pretended to have happened to the Prophet *Jeremy*. So far was he from obtaining God's Mercy
for

for his People, by his Sufferings, that their Iniquities were increased thereby, and God's Vengeance became still more severe on that Account. To make out therefore a Resemblance between them, which the literal Sense of the Prophet will not afford, another Turn is given to his Words, and they are wrested to signify, that the Sufferings of the Person here foretold, were not vicarious, the Just for the Unjust; but that the Innocent should suffer by the Means of the Guilty, and through their Fault. But, surely, had this been all that the Prophet meant, he had no Occasion once to mention the meritorious Cause of these Sufferings, much less to repeat them so oft, and so emphatically as he does. When a righteous Person is represented as openly punished, it is implied, and follows of Course, that it must have happened through the Fault of his Persecutors; and in so plain a Case to be large and explicit in explaining the meritorious Cause of an innocent Man's Sufferings, is to be unpardonably frigid, insufferably jejune. A frequent Repetition of an Event, that is somewhat

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318 S E R M O N XVI.

uncommon, is apt to nauseate ; but to inculcate over and over, what no Man in his Senses can doubt or misapprehend, is trifling to the last Degree. Admitting, therefore, that *Isaiab's* Language would be susceptible of such a Meaning, no one that duly reverences a divine Prophecy, should interpret it so disadvantageously : But really and truly, such an Interpretation is violent, as well as disrespectful. The Prophet ascribes an actual and express Efficacy to the Sufferings of God's Servant, saying, *by his Stripes we are healed.* But *Grotius* makes a new Sense for him, and makes him ascribe this Effect, not to the Sufferings, as he really does, but to the Patience of the Sufferer. He will not allow that any one was actually healed by the Stripes here spoken of, in their primary Sense ; but represents the Meaning to be, that they might have been delivered from the impending Evils, if they had credited his Messages from God, for which he suffered with eminent Patience. And how, after all, does it appear, that *Jeremy* bare his Sorrows with so exemplary a Meekness ?

Surely

S E R M O N XVI. 319

Surely this is not discernible from his own Account of himself, from which the most favourable Conclusion, that can be drawn, will be, that he was not criminally impatient. To be convinced of this, one need only peruse the 15th *Chap.* of his Prophecy, in which he wishes he had never been born, and prays to God to revenge him of his Persecutors. The same Petition he repeats, *Chap.* 17. in very strong Terms; and again in the 20th *Chap.* When *Grotius* comes to assign Instances of *Jeremy's* Patience, they amount to no more than this; that even then when he was led to Prison, and above all, when he was let down into the miry Dungeon, he neither did, nor said any Thing that was passionate. The whole Truth whereof when enquired into, is no more than this; that no angry Actions of *Jeremy* are recorded on those Occasions. But concerning the exemplary Patience of *Jeremy*, not one express Word is mentioned throughout his whole History. Again, *Isaiab* foretells, that *God's righteous Servant* should bear the Iniquities of many, i. e. says *Grotius*,

320 · S E R M O N XVI.

Jeremiah took away the Sins of many, by reforming those many: But first of all, where, and in what Instances, does it appear to have been fact, that *Jeremy*, by his Doctrine and Example, reformed many? It is confessed, that his Behaviour in some Points was edifying and instructive; but it does not necessarily follow thence, that it must have had a due Effect at all, much less that it reformed many. And, *Secondly*, before we admit, that to bear the Iniquity of others, can possibly mean to take away Sin by reforming Sinners, we reasonably expect at least one clear Instance of the Expression being so understood, which has not hitherto, that I know of, been vouchsafed us. When the *Socinians* are pressed with Scripture Texts, concerning Christ's taking away and bearing our Sins, their grand Subterfuge, in order to set aside the Doctrine of his expiatory Sacrifice, is, what *Grotius* here employs, *viz.* they explain all those Passages, as meaning no more, than that Christ, by his exemplary Life and dying patiently, recommended Virtue to Mankind, and, by so doing, took

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away,

S E R M O N XVI. 321

away, or bare the Sins of the World. But their bare Affirmation that it does so signify, is all the Proof that Orthodox Writers can obtain from them. Whilst, for the obvious Sense of the Words *bearing the Iniquities of others*, tho' such a Sense, when it is not absurd, never needs a Voucher, we have undeniable Authority. Thus, *Lamentations*, Chap. v. ver. 7. the Prophet complains, saying, *Our Fathers have sinned, and are not, and we bear their Iniquities*, i. e. most evidently we suffer on their Accounts. But the *Socinian* Interpretation can have no possible Place here; it being absurd to talk of reforming those that are not, i. e. who are dead.

Lastly, *Isaiab* predicts of him who was the Subject of the Prophecy now under Consideration, that he should make Intercession for the Transgressors; meaning more eminently those Transgressors, who were the efficient Causes of his transcendent Sorrows and Sufferings above described. Now, that this could be no Characteristick of *Jeremy*, appears from what has been

VOL. I. Y already

322 S E R M O N XVI.

already said ; unless we could suppose the Prophet so inconsistent with himself, as sometimes to pray for Vengeance upon his Enemies, and at other Times to intercede for them. However, *Grotius* here also endeavours to accommodate the Prophecy to *Jeremy*. His Words are: At the very Time when he suffered such Hardships from the People, he ceased not to pray to God for them: And in Proof of this Assertion, he refers us to four Passages in the Book of *Jeremy*. In the first of which he actually intercedeth, not for his Enemies, but for the People in general then labouring under a Famine, the Innocent, as well as the Guilty, including himself in the Number of those whose Iniquities testify against them. To make Intercession therefore for himself, as well as others, in which there was no Merit, could not be the Intercession meant by *Isaiab*, on Account whereof he foretold, that *the righteous Servant of God should divide the Spoil with the Strong*, and consequently is nothing to the Purpose. Two of the following Instances are still less so, because.

S E R M O N XVI. 323

because they only shew, that *Isaiab* was twice asked to intercede for them, but not that he actually complied with that Request. In the last of the four Passages, the Prophet did indeed pray unto God in Behalf of the People; but then it was not by Intercession for Forgiveness, but for his Direction in their present Difficulties, and upon solemn Promise of Compliance with the divine Answer, whether it proved Good or Evil. Besides, at this Time *Jeremy* had no ill Treatment from the People, but in the present Instance was courted and caressed by them. It does not therefore appear, that *Jeremy* ever interceded for the Transgressors, whose Sins he bare, and consequently he was not the Person meant by *Isaiab*, on this, as well as on many other Accounts.

And now, upon the Whole, since the Characters of the Prophecy before us suit not with *Jeremiab*, nor can possibly agree with the Description of the Messiah, whom the *Jews* expect; and since, at the same Time, they tally to a wonderful Degree

324 S E R M O N XVI.

of Exactness with our Lord Christ; to the *Jews*, at least, this must be a valid and convincing Argument that he is the Christ, of whom *Isaiab* spake, and that they ought not to look for any other. The Infidels also may hence learn, that the sacred Writers, when they alledged this Prophecy in Proof of that Conclusion to *Jews*, did nothing but what is agreeable to the strictest Rules of Reasoning, not arguing either weakly or impertinently, but with a Strength and Clearness, which they of the Circumcision could not justly object to or gainsay.

S E R M O N X V I I .

M A L A C H I i i i . I .

Behold, I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the Way before me : And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple ; even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in ; behold he shall come.

THIS Prophecy is applied by St. Mark, in the Beginning of his Gospel, to *John the Baptist*, as the Forerunner or Harbinger to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : Nor is there any Thing in the Prediction, but what very well suits such an Application : For *John* acted the Part of the Messenger here described. He preached that the Kingdom of Heaven was at Hand, and prepared the Way for

326 S E R M O N XVII.

one whom he owned to be so much mightier than himself, that he was not worthy to serve him in the meanest Office, to stoop down and unloose the Latchet of his Shoes. And in no long Time after this appeared that wonderful Person, of whom *John* spake: One who avowed a divine Mission and a heavenly Original; one who associated to himself a Number of Followers, professing to be their Lord and Master, and with sufficient Plainness gave himself out to be the Person whom the *Jews* then earnestly sought or expected to save them from their Enemies. This Lord, or divine Person suddenly came to the Temple, and by exercising a Jurisdiction therein over the profane Traders, who resorted thither to buy and sell, and change Money, he acted as the Proprietor of that sacred Place, and as one who esteemed it to be his Temple. In the whole of his Ministry he also declared himself to be the Messenger of a new Covenant, which he tendered to the World in the Name of God his Father. So many Events therefore, in the History of Jesus, corresponding

S E R M O N XVII. 327

ing with the Prediction of *Malachi*, there was evidently nothing forced or unnatural in the Application that is accordingly made by *St. Mark*. This then is a Prophecy among others, which contradicts what has of late been so confidently affirmed by an Antichristian Writer, that the Allegations made from the Old Testament by the Writers of the New, are impertinent to the Purpose for which they are cited, not relating to the Events of Jesus, or the Things of the Gospel. And this is all we are concerned to prove against our Adversaries the Deists, with Regard to the Passage before us: But against the *Jews*, it is strongly conclusive. For they are obliged to maintain the Credit of their own Prophets; which is not to be done for *Malachi*, if the Words cited from him in the Text were not verified, as *St. Mark* explains them, in *John the Baptist* and our blessed Saviour. Because if this was not the true Meaning thereof, *Malachi's* Prophecy has not yet been compleated, nor can be so at any Time hereafter. For no one pretending to be the Messenger of a Covenant from

328 S E R M O N XVII.

God, did ever, that we know of, come to the second Temple as its Proprietor ; and the Temple now subsisting no more, no one, in the present, or in any future Age, can come to it in the Character described by *Malachi*, nor indeed under any Character whatever. Of this the *Jews* are so sensible, that, to defeat the Force of our Reasoning on this Head, they have devised the Notion of a third Temple or Sanctuary to be built by their Messiah, when he shall appear, in the same Place where the two former ones stood. But this will by no Means serve their Turn ; for the Temple, spoken of by *Malachi*, to which the Lord was to come suddenly, as the Proprietor thereof, was one already built to his Hand, and not to be built by him. It seems as if the Lord was to appear there for the first Time in the Fullness of his Character ; which was accordingly verified in the Person of Jesus, when he was presented there by his Mother, and recognized by old *Siméon* in the Spirit of Prophecy as the Saviour of the World, and published as such by *Anna* the Prophetess. Whereas, when the

S E R M O N XVII. 329

the Messiah, whom the *Jews* expect, shall come to a Temple built by himself, there will be nothing sudden or wonderful in the Action, and consequently nothing that comes up to this Prediction. Besides, the Circumstances of the Time, in which the Prophecy of the Text was delivered, naturally lead us to understand the Temple therein mentioned, of the Temple then standing, or the second Temple: For it was then newly built after the Captivity, and one principal End for which the three last Prophets, *Haggai*, *Zachariah*, and *Malachi*, were commissioned, was to encourage the *Jews* in the Building of the House, and to reconcile them to it after it was built. Neither the Splendour of its outward Form, nor its Furniture within, were comparable to that which the old Men remembred in the Temple of *Solomon*: No visible Glory attended the Consecration of the second Temple: The Pot of Manna, and the Rod of *Aaron* were no more to be seen there: No Oracle was delivered from the Mercy-seat, no Urim or Thummim, no Priest's Ephod to resolve Doubts,

330 S E R M O N XVII.

Doubts, and to finish such perplexed Controversies as should arise among the People. The old Men therefore wept to see the Difference between the two Temples, and the next Generation began to despise the second Temple, and its Services, after they found it to be inferior to the first, in so many and so important Particulars. Knowing that this must necessarily happen, the People at first were loth to begin the Building: They excused themselves by saying the Time is not come, the Time that the Lord's House should be built. And when the Work was so far advanced, as that a Comparison might be formed between it and the former, this second Temple was in the Eyes of such, as had seen the other in its Glory, as nothing. To comfort the *Jews* therefore under these Discouragements, God declared by his Prophet *Haggai* that the Desire of all Nations should come, and that he would fill this House with Glory. And again, that the Glory of this latter House should be greater than that of the former. Here the Prophet indisputably speaks of the second Temple:

And

S E R M O N XVII. 331

And tho' it is not exprefly faid that the Defire of all Nations, or the Meffiah fhould come to that Houfe; yet it is fufficiently intimated by what follows, *viz.* that this fecond Houfe of the Lord fhould be filled with Glory greater than that of the former. For the firft Temple had fuch Symbols of the divine Prefence, as could be exceeded by nothing but his perfonal and vifible Appearance in it. And if that was not *Haggai's* Meaning, his Prophecy was in no Meafure, or Degree compleated. Beaufe, in all other Refpects, the Glory of the fecond Houfe was not only not greater than that of the former, but alfo incomparably lefs. All thefe encouraging Promifes had not, it feems, their due Effect upon the *Jews*: But the Priests as well as the People defpifed God, and difhonoured his holy Services. The latter robbed God of his Tythes and Offerings, and brought the Blind and the Lame for Sacrifices, which the former offered, tho' againft the Precept, thinking any Thing good enough for the Table of the Lord, in a Houfe fo void of Pomp and Splendour as the fecond Temple

332 S E R M O N XVII.

ple was. God therefore was pleased to speak more fully and plainly of the Glory of this despised Temple by his Servant *Malachi*, than he had done before by the Mouth of *Haggai*, declaring expressly, that this Desire of all Nations, the Lord whom they sought, the Angel of the Covenant whom they delighted in, should not only come, but, like other great Princes, should be preceded by his Harbinger, and should come to that very Temple by them, at present, deemed so contemptible; by whose coming the Prophecy of *Haggai* should be thoroughly compleated, which foretold that the Glory of the second House should be greater than that of the former. For the former was only honoured with God's symbolical Presence, whilst the latter was visited by Him, in whom dwelt the Fullness of the Godhead bodily. The Occasion of these two Prophecies therefore being one and the same, they must relate both to one and the same Temple. For what Comfort could be administered to the *Jews* of *Zorobabel's* Days, who grieved at the Inferiority of the House then built? Or
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S E R M O N XVII. 333

how could it procure from them a due Reverence to that holy Structure, and its Services, to be told that at a vast Distance of Time to come, when they, and perhaps many future Generations were dead and gone, Messiah should come and erect a more glorious Temple than that of *Solomon*, and honour it with his Presence? A Prediction so little to the Purpose, would carry with it more the Appearance of Banter than of Consolation. Upon the whole then, the Expedient of a third Temple, devised for frustrating the Application of the Prophecy in the Text to Jesus our Lord, will by no Means answer either the Design, or the Expression of *Malachi*, and his prophetick Character must be given up, if he had not therein a Respect to the Times of the Gospel. And, indeed, had we none but *Jews* to deal with about the Argument from the Prophecy, it would be no difficult Matter to stop their Mouths upon the Principles already laid down, as to the Prediction in my Text, and many others of the like Kind. But such Reasonings have no Effect on modern Unbelievers, who have no Concern for the Reputation of ancient Prophecy,

334 S E R M O N XVII.

phesy, but believe it to be all Imposture. They therefore are never better pleased, than when they are assigning such Senses to Prophecies as were never fulfilled, and setting aside such Meanings as have been verified by the Events of the Gospel-Age. Agreeable to which is the Conduct of the Writer so often referred to in these Lectures, with Relation to the Prophecy before us, concerning which he endeavours to prove, that the whole Context of *Malachi* is inconsistent with the History of Jesus, to which it is applied by the Evangelist *St. Mark*. Let us therefore hear and examine what he has to offer upon this Head.

First then, he says, that “ the second
 “ Messenger in *Malachi* is to come to his
 “ Temple, as Lord and Proprietor thereof ;
 “ that is, to dwell and preside there, and
 “ to give Oracles, and to set up the *Jewish*
 “ Forms of Worship ; which is wholly in-
 “ consistent with the Character and Designs
 “ of Jesus, who came not to the Temple
 “ to dwell and preside there, as its Lord
 “ and Proprietor, but came to put an End
 “ to the Temple, and to destroy the very
 “ Notion

S E R M O N XVII. 335

“ Notion of the Necessity of such a Place,
 “ and to set up a new Form of Worship
 “ different from the *Jewish*.”

Now we grant, that the second Messenger in *Malachi* is to come to his Temple, as the Lord and Proprietor thereof; and we further grant, that the Lord and Proprietor of a Temple, as such, if he pleases, may dwell and preside there, may give Oracles, and set up or restore past Forms of Worship, after they have been long disused: But then we contend that the Lord and Proprietor of a Temple may likewise, as such, come to it with very different Views: His Coming may be in order either to demolish it, and erect one that is more commodious in its Room, or else to leave it in Ruins, and to have no such peculiar Place of Residence in any Time to come; and we insist upon it, that by taking this latter Method he would as fully assert this Dominion, as Lord and Proprietor of the Place, as by the former. Since therefore the Prophet does not expressly set down for which of these two Purposes the second Messenger is to come to his Temple,

336 S E R M O N XVII.

ple, the Writer aforementioned had no Authority to explain it necessarily of either. So that supposing the Character and Designs of Jesus to be such as he describes them, there is no Inconsistency between them and the Office of the second Messenger, as it is set down in the Text : For by putting an End to the Temple, by destroying the very Notion of the Necessity of such a Place, and setting up a new Form of Worship, different from the *Jewish*, he abundantly shewed, that it was his Temple, and that he was the absolute Lord and Proprietor, both of the House itself, and of all its appointed Uses. Not but that when our Lord came to his Temple he exercised a Jurisdiction there, suitable to what our Author will have to belong to the Lord and Proprietor thereof : For he often presided there, giving forth those divine Oracles which he came to publish in the World ; and tho' he had no Occasion to set up the *Jewish* Forms of Worship, because they then, and for many Years after, remained in full Vigour, yet he submitted to them in his own Person, and recommended to others a punctual Compliance with

with them. Besides this, he exercised an actual Jurisdiction, as became the Lord and Proprietor of the Temple, purging it from Profanation and Abuse with his own Hand, and authoritatively requiring the Removal of such Practices as did not become the House of Prayer. *Lastly*, At his triumphant Entry into *Jerusalem*, the Procession ended at the Temple, whither he came as the Lord and Proprietor of the Place, and as the Palace of his Kingdom. Every Way therefore Jesus the Saviour manifested, that, according to *Malachi's* Prediction, he came to his Temple, having Power either to adorn, preserve, and purify, or to put an End to it and all its legal Services.

A second Objection against Jesus's being the Lord, who was to come to his Temple, is, that he did not come to it till many hundred Years after *Malachi's* Days, who speaks of one that was to come suddenly or immediately. But here, *First*, *Suddenly* does not always and necessarily mean soon or immediately, but often, and indeed more frequently, denotes a Season or Action, that is unlooked for and unexpected. And such

338 S E R M O N XVII.

was the Coming of Jesus to his Temple, at least in his Manner and Appearance : For the Christ expected by the *Jews* was to appear as an earthly Sovereign ; whereas our Lord utterly disclaimed all Pretensions of that Nature, and instead of making *Jerusalem* the Metropolis of the World, and its Temple the universal Center of Worship, foretold the Desolation of both. Again, *Secondly*, Granting that by *suddenly*, *Malachi* intended the same as *immediately*, does not that Expression evidently relate to what goes before ? which is this : *I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the Way before me.* Then follows : *And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly, or immediately, come to his Temple, i. e. immediately after the sending of the Messenger, or as soon as he should have prepared his Way before him.* And this happened accordingly. For soon after the Preaching of *John the Baptist* came Jesus, and was acknowledged by him as his Lord and Superior, as the Lamb of God that was to take away the Sins of the World : Under which Character the Messiah had been spoken of by the Prophets of Old.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, This second Messenger in *Malachi*, we are told, is stiled by him the Messenger of the Covenant, *i. e.* the *Jewish* Covenant, the Covenant made with *Levi*, the Covenant made with the Fathers; which ill agrees with the Circumstances of Jesus, who came to put an End to the Covenant made of Old with *Levi* and the Fathers.

But here the Lord in *Malachi* is stiled the Messenger of the Covenant made with *Levi* and the Fathers, either with Regard to what he had done formerly therein, or to what he was hereafter to do. Now the latter of these is an absurd and an impossible Sense: For the Covenant made of Old with *Levi* and the Fathers, was not then to be put in the Hand of a Messenger, having been ratified, accepted, and practised a thousand Years before. He must therefore be termed the Messenger of the Covenant, from the Concern he had in the first Transacting thereof. And if that Covenant was some time or other to have an End, of which we have many clear Intimations from the *Jewish* Prophets themselves; who

340 S E R M O N XVII.

was so proper to be employed in vacating the Covenant, as he that first proposed it? There is therefore no Inconsistency in the Character of Jesus, when he is considered as having been first the Angel, the Mediator and Messenger of the *Levitical* Covenant, and afterwards the great Instrument in its Dissolution. Indeed the Christian Church has all along supposed this to be the very Truth, being led into the Notion from many Passages both of the Old and New Testament.

Fourthly, The Messenger of the Covenant in *Malachi*, and the Lord who was to come suddenly to his Temple, is set forth by the Prophet as one sought for by the *Jews*, one whom they delighted in; whereas Jesus, according to his own Character, appears not to be a Person sought by the *Jews*, nor could he be their Delight.

But how easy is it in Reply to say, that the Prophet is not here speaking of the Person of Messiah, but of his Office. And however it might fare with the former of these, the latter of them was certainly expected with Impatience, and was a Matter
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S E R M O N XVII. 341

of great Delight to the *Jews*. They loved the Office of a Saviour; but how ill they should relish his Person, *Isaiab* had, with sufficient Clearness, predicted, describing the bad Usage he was to meet withall, and the Incredulity of his Hearers. It is irrational therefore to suppose *Malachi* in the Text foretold Messiah's Person would be acceptable to the *Jews*, after *Isaiab* had clearly signified the direct Contrary; and unless that be supposed, this fourth Objection has neither Force nor Pertinence in it.

Fifthly, and lastly, We are put in Mind that the Messenger of the Covenant in *Malachi* was to purify the Sons of *Levi*, that they may duly perform the *Jewish* Ceremonies as of Old: Whereas Jesus came to put an End to all the old Ordinances, and to the Covenant made of Old with *Levi* and the Fathers, and to destroy the *Jewish* Priesthood, and not to reform it, by rendering it conformable to the Primitive Plan of *Moses*.

Here the Objector has altered the Words of *Malachi*, who does not say the Messenger

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342 S E R M O N XVII.

ger of the Covenant was to purify the Sons of *Levi*, that they may duly perform the *Jewish* Ceremonies as of Old; but that they may offer an Offering in Righteousness, and that the Offering of *Judah* and *Jerusalem* might be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the Days of Old: So that the Performance of *Jewish* Ceremonies is the Addition of this Writer. And indeed that the Offering in Righteousness, the pleasant Offering spoken of by the Prophet, was not to be according to the *Jewish* Ceremonies is plain. *First*, From the Prophecy of *Jeremy*, Chap. xxxi. in which a new Covenant was promised, different from that made of Old with *Levi* and the Fathers: It being against all Likelihood to suppose, that the Messenger of the Covenant would come on no more important Errand, than that of reforming a Dispensation, which was soon to have an End, *Secondly*, The same is yet more evident from *Malachi* himself, who declares to the *Levitical* Priesthood, that he would no more accept an Offering at their Hand: *For*, adds he, *from the Rising of the Sun, even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be*

S E R M O N XVII. 343

great among the Gentiles, and in every Place Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering; for my Name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts. From this Passage we learn, that it was no Part of the Angel of the Covenant's Business to confirm the *Levitical* Covenant, and to reform it after the Primitive Plan of *Moses*. For according to that Plan, none but the Priests, the Sons of *Levi*, were to burn Incense unto the Lord, nor were they to do it but in the Place appointed: Whereas the pure Offering, spoken of by *Malachi*, was to be offered in every Place, *from the Rising of the Sun, unto the going down of the same, i. e.* all the habitable World over. This then was the Offering in Righteousness, the pleasant Offering, which the Sons of *Levi* were to offer, after they are purified by the Messenger of the Covenant; and therefore those Sons of *Levi* cannot be the *Jewish* Priesthood, nor *Judah* and *Jerusalem*, the *Jewish* People only, but God's true Priests and People throughout the Universe.

And

And thus having considered and answered all the wretched Cavils of this Writer, against the Pertinency of the Prophecy in the Text to the Purposes for which it is applied by St. *Mark*; and having shewn, that if Jesus our Saviour, and his Forerunner *John the Baptist*, did not fulfill it, the Time of its Completion is utterly elapsed, I have a Right to conclude, that the *Jews* have only this Alternative left, to receive Jesus for the Christ, or to reject the Writings of their own Prophets. And for Infidels, the Argument from Miracles for the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the divine Authority of the New Testament, will have room to operate the more effectually, when they are convinced that those sacred Records contain no absurd Claims, or impertinent Allegations from the Law and the Prophets; but that the Citations made, and the Authorities urged therein, are, to say the least of them, fair, specious, and plausible. Now to God the Father, &c.

End of the FIRST VOLUME.

